

The
MASTER
BREED

Francis Dickie

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THE MASTER BREED

FRANCIS DICKIE

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BY

FRANCIS DICKIE

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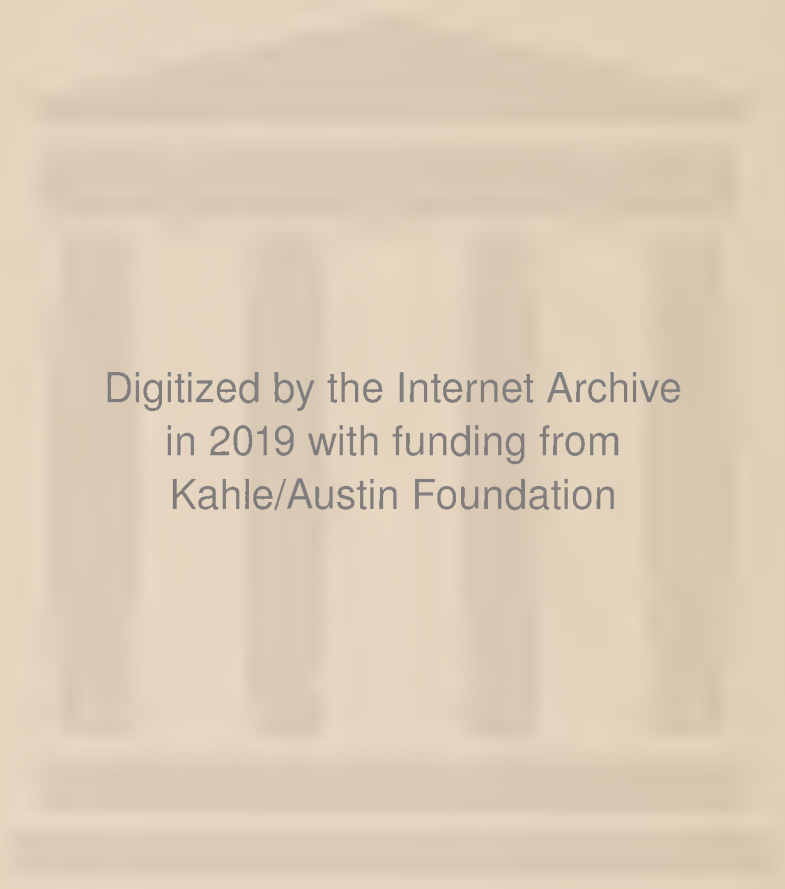


THE MASTER BREED. I

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CHAPTER ONE

Bill Kane, Third of the House of Kane

“ROMANCE!” Kane voiced wearily. “Why, it’s the hardest thing in the world to find, except the kind you buy at the theatre or the movies or in a book.” He leaned back in the huge, soft leather chair, and fell to staring out onto darkening Mason Street.

Save for himself and his two companions, one lounging on either side of him in armchairs of equal luxuriousness and vastness, the sitting room of the Argonaut Club was deserted. For several seconds his companions continued smoking in silence, something in the dusk of the Spring twilight and the lessening sounds of the city creating within them a sense of hush and stillness too blissful to be broken.

Jimmy Shaler, on the right, was the first to rouse. “You’re all wrong, Bill,” he remarked decisively, sitting up straighter in his chair. “The world’s full of romance.” He waved his cigar

toward the window, his motion taking in the street below and the city beyond. "Romance? There's lots of it. ROMANCE spelled in big letters. But the trouble with you, you're surfeited with it, till now it palls. To be frank, Kane, you've got too much money. Now, lots of things that are commonplace to you are romance to me. And why?" He paused a moment. Then, noting a light of interest in Kane's eyes as well as in Bobbie Steele's, a fellow millionaire in the third chair, Jimmie Shaler proceeded to answer his own question.

"And why?" he repeated, "are these things that are commonplace to you, wonderful enough to me to deserve the name romance? Because I'm only a forty-dollar-a-week newspaperman. And, being such, the possession of a sea-going yacht such as you have, to mention only one of many things, offers to me limitless possibilities, that are a joy even to dream about." There was a faint touch of bitterness in his last words. But hurriedly he added, in more cheerful tone, as one returning quickly to the firm ground, momentarily deserted, of a fixed philosophy: "But then I can only accept my own destiny."

While the newspaperman talked, Kane had half turned in the big chair, throwing one leg idly over the low, rounding arm. Somehow, sprawled there in that huge, hundred and fifty dollar masterpiece

among luxurious leather chairs in this most exclusive of San Francisco clubs, this blonde, giant, boyish man seemed out of place.

Six feet he was, and broad in proportion, with shoulders fitted rather for a cudgel-wielding cave-man than a club fellow. His heavy-columned neck, massive yet relieved from the bullock-kind by a perfect length and fineness, carried symmetrically, rounded head, the brow high, white and broad, the eyes keen blue, within their depths that light of power and command. His nose was straight and long, and when he smiled two deep-cleft lines curved from the nostrils' edges to the corners of the lips of a mouth that was large, full-lipped, yet without weakness or indulgence showing in its lines; and his smile revealed two dazzling white rows of square teeth, teeth large, firm and strong, like molars of healthy carnivora.

His was the frame and features of such a kind as graced the bodies of hardy adventurers, pioneers of new lands, rangers of far, strange seas, fit to tread the reeling deck of sturdy sailing ship on heaving, storm-tossed main, or lead the rush against a savage foe on foreign soil and, winning, put the vanguard to the sword, their town to sack, and carry off the women as concubines and slaves. There was vigorous, virile life in every limb and line of Kane's twenty-six-year-old body. And Kane's ancestors had been of the doer kind.

His grandfather, Peter Kane, had trekked from Missouri and fought and dodged the Indians in those bitter early days of the western plains, and won through to the hardly-striven-for paradise of California. The great days of gold, begun in '49, were in the living when grandfather Kane and his bullock-drawn wains and his wiry wife arrived. Formerly a farmer, he had become a successful gold miner. Too, shrewd beyond the average of his time, he had quickly sensed the possibilities of this great state, and realized the worth of things other than gold. He had become possessor of much real estate in San Francisco, and much land in the Sacramento Valley. A half-a-dozen coastwise trading ships and whalers had followed. All of which possessions were the beginning of a fortune to which his son, John Kane, had diligently added; in the doing toiling so slavishly as to hurry to an early grave, leaving behind an accumulation of real estate, ships, mines, farms, forests, and cash, amounting in value to some twenty millions of dollars.

Always, it seems, since the beginning of time, there have been master men—the great brains that plan and direct and finance and oversee the progress of the race, the building of wide, new empires. Nowhere in all the world is this more in evidence than in North America, a wondrous land, changed by master minds in less than two

centuries of active work, from a wilderness to the richest continent of earth. Of such race and kind were the Kanes—Peter and John, the first and second of the house of Kane in California—supermen, keen-visioned, active-bodied, toilers manual in the beginning; but, leaders and commanders, who, in short space, became captains of hosts of men less clever, and accomplished great things through the labour of these thousands fitted to execute but not to plan. And both men, Peter and John, after what seems to be the way of the master breed of men, had fathered but one of their kind.

Thus it was that William Kane, third of the house of Kane, found himself at twenty-two years of age the master of so many millions thoughtfully harnessed that he was relieved of work of even the lightest executive kind.

Big of frame, healthy, strong, the blood of doers in his veins, possessed of unfogged brains, his by right of untainted heritage and good care since birth, William, third of the house of Kane, was given to idle ways. That wealth and correspondingly-brought power, which his sire and grandsire had striven and rung from new land by prodigious toil and executive acumen, was all his by right of birth. He remained still of the master breed in brain and brawn; but such was the economic situation his kind before him by

their work had made possible, that he no longer needed to work, to think, execute and command, save in most perfunctory way; and even this he had neglected. Thus the house of Kane in its third generation had become a negligible quantity in the way of the further doing of the world's worth while work. True, Kane ships still sailed the seas; Kane ranches and mines and mills still operated and ever added to his general fortune. But it was only a flood of money that resulted! There was no expansion, no growth, no new territory opened up and conquered and made worth while by this wealth that in former times had been always actively re-employed. Instead a lethargy had come; that lethargy which too often is found in the third generation of such families as that of the house of Kane.

Yet William Kane, more frequently known as "Bill," had not been inactive. Society, male and female, knew him, and rather affectionately, by the name of "Wild" Bill; as did also the dinner-pail-carrying crowd and the sporting world, these latter through the medium of the sensational press, ever ready to play up the doings of men of the master breed. Yet the feats by which he had won his name, while recklessly brave in several instances, were futile, foolish, and often drunken. In his yacht he had sailed the roughest seas and circled the globe in record time to win a bet.

Short trip this was and uneventful. But a few months after its completion he had made a second voyage, one marked by excitement and adventure. In drunken mood at Nagasaki he had wrecked a tea-house, beaten off a dozen tiny policemen, eluded a half-a-hundred others, and, single-handed and alone carried off the almond-eyed lady of his momentary desire to his yacht at anchor in the harbour—though in detracton of the feat, it is only fair to say the lady was not an unwilling captive. Later, in the Sulu Sea, he had dared a pirate junk, by pretence of surrender let them come aboard, then met them at the head of his men and, after short and desperate fight, sent them flying, leaving behind a half-a-dozen stunned and two dead as evidence of the prowess of "Wild" Bill and his crew, the crew mostly bred of the San Francisco waterfront, more piratical of blood and tough of thew than the yellow men they had so well defeated.

A hundred other deeds had Bill Kane performed on this voyage when only twenty-four; and a hundred others had he been hero of in the days intervening to this night two years later in early May, 1910, as he sat in the Argonaut Club, staring out into the night. But too much of the unusual had made him blasé, hypercritical, giving rise now to his voiced complaint in the silence of the lounging room.

And hearing him, Jimmy Shaler, recently appointed dramatic editor of the *Daily Call*—but till lately forty-dollar-a-week reporter on humdrum city beat—thought of his millionaire companion's many deeds. To the newspaperman these varied happenings, and the fact of recent descent from such illustrious ancestors as Peter and John Kane—names so famous as to be historical in California—was all warp and woof of so romantic a texture that he was continually affected by it when in Kane's company—at times came very close to envy, from which he was just saved by his firmly founded philosophy of fatalism, a conviction that no man was responsible for his destiny. He smoked his cigar down to finger-burning shortness without vouchsafing further remark.

Kane presently broke the silence. "I'm surprised at you, Jimmy," he said in gentle raillery. "According to what you've just said you make romance a thing relative to wealth. Surely the mere fact that you do not own money, a sea-going yacht, or any of a thousand things I have, does not prevent you from living or experiencing romance."

"No; that's not what I mean. You, by reason of your money, your sea-going yacht were of course able to go, seek, find romance. But now looking back on it, it has lost its savour. So you

sit here to-night, discontented. Yet to me all you have done is the highest order of romance."

Wild Bill, a little of his boredom gone, let his left leg slip to the floor from off the leather arm, and leaning over toward Shaler, waved his hand good naturedly triumphant. "But by your words you are still making romance relative to wealth."

They had been friends for some little time, but never till to-night had their conversation approached such ground. Always, both Kane and Jimmy, each in his way sensitive of allusion to money, both feeling it a barrier to highest friendship in vague intangible way, but both fighting to conquer this, had heretofore kept their talks to different ground. But now once launched into a discussion Jimmy Shaler decided to voice his philosophy. "No, wealth does not make romance possible. Some of the things you have conceived and executed were romance in its purest form, to my way of thinking. And they were in no way dependent on your money. I would have thrilled and been proud forever had I done them. Take that time six months ago when you single-handed fought those two policemen and held them off from entering the stage entrance of the Thalia dance hall till Flora Fane made her get-away out through the dance hall crowd and was safely on her way across the Bay to Oakland. The fact that Flora wasn't a young lady a man would in-

roduce his sister to didn't matter to you. At the crucial moment you happened to meet up with her, to find out she's being hounded because she knows too much about a certain police captain, and that if she's caught she's bound to be framed and railroaded for plenty time to make the captain safe. And what do you do but jump in and help Flora escape, fight policemen, and get locked up and fined—a regular modern Sir Galahad! If that isn't romance shorn of all aid from wealth, what is it?" Jimmy, grown quite fervent, fell silent; then more quietly went on: "No; wealth will not assure one of romance. I could just as well have done that as you, had Destiny given me the frame and the courage and the opportunity. It's all a matter of Destiny. We none of us are master of our lives. You have done a dozen things that I could have; not like fighting policemen, but other things not depending on strength, but one's purely a matter of clever conception. Now, why did not I, with my eternal hunger for romance, become the principal actor in some incident like you have done? Because I lacked the initiative, the executive. I was not the individual for such things. In short: I was born to casual ways; that is my destiny."

"I wonder now," Kane said aloud, but his tone was strangely far away as one pondering something never thought of before in a carelessly

accepting life. "I wonder are some men born to casual ways?" Then almost immediately rousing himself he sprang lightly to his feet. "Hell, that ain't right!" he said ungrammatically and with tremendous emphasis, and continued in vast good humour, "all darned nonsense. You, Jimmy Shaler, for all you're only five feet eight have just as good a chance to be romantic as I, or anybody else. It's all a matter of luck. Given the situation, and you'd put me to shame." He slapped the reporter heavily on the shoulder, the hearty blow of one comrade to another; the action that of one big, strong, warm-hearted man to another.

But Jimmy only shrugged his shoulders. He settled himself a little deeper in the big chair, shaking his head with a mournful, dolorous motion, and, as if forced from him, voiced with lugubrious certainty. "No; some men are born to casual ways. It isn't fair that one man should have mostly pleasure and another pain, or leisure and toil, but that is the way of life. One has to accept the cards as they are dealt out."

But Wild Bill was on his mettle now to prove victor in this argument. He thought of that day, more than a year past now, when in anger he had marched into the editorial offices of the *Daily Call*, fully intending to clean out the place by force of his own muscular arms in revenge for some slur-

ring words in a write-up on himself the paper had published the previous day, and all the news room staff had fled save Jimmy Shaler, puny, five feet eight, the frailest of them all. Ever since that day the millionaire had loved the newspaperman as a brother. On that day, instead of fighting him, Kane had carried him off to lunch, beginning a friendship, cemented and made strong by many days of companionship in the following months. Recalling this incident as a most telling weapon for the argument, Kane went on:

"You're just like me, Jimmy, you've lost your perspective. Anything that's near you loses its romantic shades. Now take our first meeting. That's really romantic when you come to look at it."

Jimmy brightened a moment. It was one of the red letter days in a life monotonous. He nodded admission of the other's point.

Then suddenly, out of the conversation an idea was fostered in the devil-may-care soul of Wild Bill Kane. He said, and there was the devil's own recklessness, the madness of a headstrong boy, in his voice: "To prove that old fatalism of yours is the bunk, Jimmy, old boy, and that romance is to be found for the seeking, I'll take you two out with me and we'll find romance, the kind you spell in capital letters. Come on, you two, we'll turn the Barbary Coast upside down and find it."

But though both Steele and Jimmy rose to their feet with motion of men obedient to a stronger will, Jimmy, in the next moment, raised protesting plaint against their destination: "Oh, no; no, you'll find no romance on the Barbary Coast. It's only sordid, commercial and sad."

But Wild Bill was not to be gainsaid. Accepting Jimmy's words as a challenge and a dare, he said gaily: "I'll show you romance to-night or give you my right eye; and you know how I value that."

Kane spoke always low. Like all the rest of him—the massive physique, the perfect poise of perfect head, the keen blue eyes, that knew not fear or ever wavered before a glance, the strong, firm, white hands, the hugely broad shoulders, yet unloutish for all their size—like all these finished parts of the finished man he was, his voice was resonant with a fibrous, deep-toned timbre, like unto one of those ancient copper bells cast from molten metals rich in strange sound ingredients long lost to twentieth-century man. Differently situated in life, he might with such a voice have been a king among such Bohemians as San Francisco's café entertainers, or, better still, won fame upon the stage of opera. As it was, men always turned respectful ear when he spoke, even though he and his millions were unknown to them; and women!—they listened, loved

instantly, and were lost did they come too long in contact with its articulating. By its very depth and resonance, yet without robbing it of finer tune, Wild Bill could bring a bellow frightening in its power and loudness. His sailors, on that world round trip and others, had come to respect it, and be proud of the utterer. Policemen had heard it ringing loud over the din of sundry street fights. Many and varied other men and women had listened to it and given love, homage, respect to the speaker.

On the way out Kane and his companions stopped at the short buffet of the club, for it is ever the way of the twentieth-century man to well load with spirits when on romantic errand bound.

Each of them, after the strange way of modern males, treated the others. That this action of everyone buying a round of drinks was no different, either in quantity of liquor consumed or the amount of money spent, than had they individually purchased three drinks apiece, played no part in the matter. Man-custom—by whom begun, and when, no one can say—is truly strange regarding things bibacious. John treats Tom, and Tom must needs treat John; such is the law of the glass wherever men foregather upon the hemisphere.

The bartender had just set up the third round

before them when a club attendant entered with a telephone summons for Steele. A minute later Steele returned from answering this to regretfully announce he must tear himself away. Steele for all he was in similar fortunate class with Kane in the matter of inherited millions, was busy establishing a huge fleet of lumber-conveying freighters; and the docking of two of these a few minutes before now necessitated his leaving.

CHAPTER TWO

In Which Wild Bill Kane Begins to Think

IT was growing dark when Kane and Shaler reached the street and climbed into a taxicab. As they were wheeled rapidly toward the Barbary Coast, Jimmy repeated his protest: "Why go down there, Bill? There's no romance on the Barbary Coast; only things sordid and sad; drunken sailors and soldiers, and tired-faced women whose main aim in life is to pile up nightly as many drink percentage checks as possible."

In his heart of hearts Kane admitted the justness and truth of Jimmy's words. Truly, the women who frequented the great dance halls such as the Thalia, The Midway and the rest, scarce smacked of romance, except perhaps to the men of the camps and ships with strong upon them the sex-hunger and longing for excitement fostered by long months in the wilderness and at sea. Night after night these hundreds of girls foregathered and danced with all and sundry comers, ever urging the terpsichorean partner of the moment to buy a drink, for with every one so bought came to the girl a little brass check re-

deemable to her in cash later from the dance hall proprietor for ten per cent of the amount spent.

The Barbary Coast was an old story to both the millionaire and the newspaperman. Yet despite their blaséness to its questionable lure—if it could be fairly said of either of them that the Coast had possessed such—both Wild Bill and Shaler found Pacific Street and the locality circumambient to it at least interesting. There were many more fashionable haunts of vice, but none so picturesque as the Barbary Coast.

Here were all the flotsam and jetsam of humanity common to a great seaport. Here the four ends of the earth met, mingled, drank, fought, debauched and went their way, to give place to fresh battalions of the race of restless ones who range the globe and populate for a brief while such spots as this.

The taxi stopped before the Thalia Dance Hall. Almost opposite, and within the radius of the glow from the dance hall's brilliantly lighted front, stood a rectangular frame building, strangely forbidding of appearance, its dull green painted sides and front faded to a dirty grey. The -roof of this one storey structure was moss-grown. Its two front windows grimed with dirt, reflected sombrely the glow from the brilliantly lighted front of the dance hall. From out of the half open portal of this building, as

Wild Bill and his companion stepped to the street, there came the sound of singing. After the taxi had pulled away, the two men remained standing listening to the dolorous music as it came floating out through the half open door.

Chief and strongest came the diapason of the organ, the lugubrious fugues of a time-worn hymn wailing out upon the night, depressingly mournful, made more so by the utter absence of feeling or technique in a musician further handicapped by playing upon an instrument evidently far past its prime, and creaky from long standing in confines damp and chill. In the wake of the organ's pealing came the combined tones of perhaps half a hundred male voices raised in a monotonously rendered song. There was no life; not one single note of spiritual joy or exhaltation in that volume of sound. The singers throated the words mechanically, soullessly, a strange medley of articulation—voices quavering with beginning senile decay; voices high, cracked and harsh, parroting the refrain but badly; and voices stronger, of a clearer timbre from throats still young, yet without expression, carrying the tune with only dreary sing-song intoning, barren of one single jot of feeling, of all charm, of even the one littlest spark of human vigour or interest. It was as though were gathered a motley throng in whom all earthly pleasure, all terrestrial in-

terest or sense of joy had long since fled. Thus might the dead be expected to sing, with rattle in their throats and grim repetition of doleful chords.

As the final discordant organ note wailed its last, faded and sank to silence, trailing in its wake the last husky whifflings of these soulless songsters, Jimmy met his friend's eye.

"Could anything be more ghastly!" he said with an involuntary little shudder, and in his eyes was the shadow of pain, for his was the soul of a musician. His companion grinned good humouredly. Seeing that Jimmy was in pessimistic mood, Kane was determined to be cheerful. "Do you know," he said, "for all my many trips around here, I've never been inside that mission house. Let's go and see the end of the performance, for," he added sagely, "you never can tell, romance may be lurking for us right inside the door."

Over Jimmy's keen, sharp face spread disapproval. He shoved his hat back and ran his hands through his thick black hair, an action betokening always his search for some vagrant thought; but it did not come so he fell into step, and they crossed the street.

As they reached the double doorway, one portion of which swung open outward, a subdued shuffling of feet came to their ears and the fragmentary murmur of voices. Even in the sound of

those human tones and moving feet, indefinitely yet subtly was conveyed to the well-groomed, well-fed creatures of life's higher strata something of hopelessness, of utter weariness, of the dumb-driven cattle spirit that fused this motley mob within.

Unhesitatingly Kane and Shaler stepped inside. As they did, there came to their nostrils odours damp, dank and chill—the sour smell of sunless places, of wet floor, washed with water strong with chloride of lime, but never fully dried, mingled with many smells from unwashed bodies, and now, most strongly asserting, hung upon the air the heavy taint of coffee made from grounds boiled a second time, repulsive, carrying vague suggestion of stench, and devoid of the slightest hint of that fragrance of aroma created by the first boiling of even the cheapest of ground coffee beans.

From the entrance inward for perhaps ten feet the room was bare open floor. From here on, double rows of chairs twelve to a row, on either side of a centre aisle, filled the room to within some ten feet of the front, where a pulpit occupied the middle of the remaining space, with well to the left side of it a decrepit organ, and on the right a legless kitchen range of oblong shape. Upon this last a huge kettle simmered, giving off the prevailing odour now strong within the room.

Two brass oil lamps, one hanging from the ceiling about half way down the room, the other at the farther end over the pulpit, shed a palely diffused yellow glow, leaving still the corners of the room in shadowy gloom. About half the chairs were occupied. Men, old in appearance, though really but middle-aged, stooped, bent, ragged for the most part, with sodden features and bleared eyes, the majority of them bearing the unmistakable signs of the sea, filled these seats. But here and there were younger occupants, equally ragged, and, too, all seemingly permeated with the listless, hang-dog air—that utter enervation and spineless attitude which comes from fierce excess in lowest debauch, then hungry days when mordant pangs are always gripping, to be only aggravated by such malnutritious ingredients as black coffee of a second boiling, unrelieved by milk or sugar; and old bread, long gone sour.

The ladling out of the liquid and a chunk of bread to each man had just begun. With a strange light in his eyes the millionaire watched the proceedings, his attention particularly turned to the stout, smooth-faced man who, though he touched no hand to aid in setting forth the feast, hung near to the stove, superintending with watchful eye the serving as performed by two ragged henchmen. The fat man was well groomed

in a garb of black cloth, the clothes and collar closely affecting that style peculiar to the clergy, yet not exactly same. His face was of that full-pouched fatness, appealing in a prairie dog but repulsive in a man. Even separated by the length of the fifty foot room, the millionaire was conscious of a loathing and a slow creeping anger against this man.

For all Kane's exciting years and many experiences this was the closest he had ever come to that extreme poverty of the absolutely down and out. Circumstances, the mere fact that even when near such gatherings as this his attention had been on other things, and a till now absolute disinterestedness in things of a sociological nature, had left Wild Bill unnoticing how dire was the poverty existing so closely around him. He had been aware that there were slums and poor people. These were facts as old as society, and he had yearly assigned over many thousands of dollars to various charitable purposes. But until this minute a realization of poverty's existence had been only a dim, vaguely abstracted one.

Even now his emotions were rather of dislike toward the pouchy, paunchy man, than any interest in or sympathy with the human hulks around him.

To Jimmy Shaler, newspaper reporter on various San Francisco beats for many years, this

gathering was no new thing. And when Kane presently broke the silence with a whispered question: "What's that awful smelling stuff they're drinking?" Jimmy, out of the knowledge born of experience, quickly explained. "It's supposed to be coffee." He answered in voice openly mocking and derisive. "It's made from the second boiling of the grounds," he continued. "Old Throttalem, that's the fat, well-groomed old boy there, has an arrangement with half-a-dozen of the swellest hotels to save the once boiled grounds. He collects it, stews it over again and feeds it to his 'stiffs.' He's not a preacher, but affects the style; helps business, you know. He works in conjunction with a tract society. For an hour or two every evening some of the society come down here and lead the singing, play the organ, preach and pray and peddle a few tracts. If the 'stiffs' sit through it and sing a little they get rot gut coffee and stale bread for their virtue. Case of soak in a dose of pseudo-religion so as to get a little nutriment," he finished with the cynical worldliness of the true reporter.

"I guess that's the heavenly brigade coming now," Kane said. Following his nodded motion toward the side door of a cloak room door beside the organ, Jimmy saw emerge a sharp-faced, short, thin-bodied little man, his small, egg-like head, set on a long, thin neck, sticking ostrich-

like out from a collar two sizes too large. He rubbed his hands slowly together as he came forward, in an abstracted way, evidently a habitual motion, while his huge Adam's apple bobbed racingly up and down, oddly suggesting the bubble in a violently shaken spirit level. On either side moved a woman, both primly severe of dress, as ascetic of face, but more strongly determined of feature than their male companion. They might have been forty or sixty. About them lingered something suggestive of the early Puritans, as popularly portrayed in painting, drawing and book illustration, but the likeness quickly faded after one brief dwelling upon their faces, for they lacked the sweetness, the true sincerity and underlying goodness of character of those ancient ones. In its place was a look austere, severe, mingled with an indefinable spiritual something that clung about them like a nauseating nimbus, an oozy, falsely sanctimonious smugness, an icy piety, aloof, condescending, without heart, chilling and making crawl within themselves even these besotted, spineless clods of men.

For a brief moment the three of them exchanged conversation with Throttalem, then passed on to a side door behind the stove and went out toward the street beyond, without one smile, one word of parting cheer to these mute slaves

who for two chill hours had listened to their ministrations.

And now, the coffee being finished to the last dreg, bringing at least momentary warmth if not nutrition to empty stomachs, a few of the men began moving toward the entrance door, though Kane noted with wonderment that the majority still waited. Then to them Throttalem began handing out blue tickets.

"What are they for?" he queried of Jimmy.

"I guess they're 'flop' tickets," the reporter answered. "You see, for allowing themselves to be prayed and preached to only entitles them to a little nourishment; but with the exception of the men you see now coming out, these men have worked. For so much work they each get a free bed. This institution runs a wood yard, I believe, if my memory doesn't fail me. I think old Throttalem's specialty is kindling wood, cut from packing boxes and odds and ends of lumber. They say he supplies half the best homes with kindling. In the name of charity he begs the boxes from various big department and other stores, and also odd pieces of boards and timber ends from the millmen. For workmen, Throttalem has plenty of demand—and always a supply. Down and outs unfitted for much else, and sometimes men of better breed forced thus to keep body and soul together until better times. The

popular name for such men is 'stiffs.' They split up the boards and boxes into kindling wood, then put it in bags, then it is delivered around the city. Throttalem has three or four rigs busy all the time supplying the demand. They say he's made fifty thousand dollars out of charity for himself in the last fifteen years. And why shouldn't he? He has a big bunkhouse not far from here. The expenses of erecting and keeping up are shouldered by the members of a big church down town. Then, in addition, charitable, well-intentioned members of the congregation turn over to Throttalem blankets and provisions. The 'stiffs' get two meals a day, and then this evening lunch, which is also open to casuals, and a free bed for about eight hours' work. Oh, there's no end of graft if it is worked right! Of course," Jimmy added with true fairness which was inherent with him, "the church members mean well and do give generously. The trouble is they let oleaginous old scoundrels of Throttalem's type get full charge, and place no check or supervision over them."

"Well," the millionaire replied, "here's where the 'stiffs' have at least one good meal." Though the two had stood quite several moments just within the doorway, no one had paid them any attention, or seemed even aware of their presence. Those few casuals, forced to leave the place bedless by reason of not having done any work,

moved slowly, reluctantly, as though to protract as long as possible their exit upon the street and the damp, chill cold of the sea coast night.

Now Kane took a step forward, away from the wall to better command attention, for the light was dim where he stood. His clear, mellow voice, resonant, commanding attention, rang out like a clarion call through the room. "Attention, men!"

Instantly forty devitalized bodies were galvanized to life. Three or four, almost upon him, halted as suddenly petrified, their mouths sagging open with vacuous surprise, while their eyes showed the faintest suggestion of dawning interest.

Their attention gained, the speaker went on: "Every man who wants a good hot meal—all he can eat, absolutely free, follow me."

Expecting a rush to his heels, Kane half turned to go, but paused, for from the sodden ranks came not a move. Weak-natured fibreless creatures that they were, with brains atrophied, that instantaneous action which follows the quickly made decision of the average man, had no place in them. Their thoughts, motions, were ponderous, slow as stall-fed ox, only in their case the cause was from underfeeding of bodies long otherwise abused. Too, this unexpected offer so rich in promise, coming ringing to them out of the night seemed too good to be true. There is no man

more cunning, sly and suspicious than one long half starved and foul of body. And so these hesitated, fearing some painful provision to this offer.

In the long moment the men stood hesitating, every eye was turned full upon this exquisitely groomed young man. He in turn eyed them back. His gaze flitted from face to face, from form to form, and each and every picture of these human derelicts was fully envisioned, calculated, and then shelved away to give place to the next. And when he had gazed upon the last, a queer something filled his soul, a full and for the first time comprehension of his own vast superiority. He was acutely aware of his dominance over such men as these, no matter had they been fully fed, warm, and well housed for many weeks—no matter what the situation. It brought to him a glow and a thrill and a leaping of pulses, this feeling that was yet neither cruel, nor overbearing nor despising, but one of calm dominance, a serene certainty that he was born to rule, to enjoy command. Just as the dying struggles of a mouse long played with brings out all the latent savagery in even the kindest house cat, so it had required the seeing of this mob to bring to Kane illuminating consciousness of how varied were men's places in the world—and he thrilled that he was at the top.

And now, seeing that another order was necessary, he snapped out: "Well, get a move on you, if you want to eat." In the words was a ring and tone of command brooking no hesitation, and hardly realizing, forgetful of their suspicions, the men took a simultaneous step forward towards him.

But Throttalem, cool and unctious, caused an unexpected interruption. Like all true profiteers from the very poor, he desired no outside interference in the handling of his pitiful charges. Now, with hand upraised, palm outward in saintly posture, he moved straight toward Kane, voicing as he came: "One moment, brethren, I must have a word with this strange gentleman." His tone fairly dropped placation. And obedient as whipped curs the men stood still.

As Throttalem came closer, Kane had a full view of the man's mincing step, so out of place in such a paunched and heavy body; saw the glittering reptilian eyes, mere slits between drooping lids, and subtly felt the lizardish animality, the oleaginous slyness of this fat parasite. A hatred so furious crept over Kane that, fearing for his own poise, and desirous for once of avoiding trouble, so he might lead his newly acquired proteges in peace, he decided on rapid action.

His hand dived quickly into his pocket and, with Throttalem still a good ten feet away,

brought forth a roll of bills, crinkly, shiny of large denomination. "Here, boys!" Kane straightened the green and yellow backs out, waved them furiously so all might see. "I'm going to buy you one big feed; but you got to hurry."

Turning quickly he dived for the door, with Jimmy right behind. Now close at their heels came the rabble, voicing queer animal sounds of joy, inarticulate, throaty yelpings. The sight of so much cash had swept their last doubt away, carried them from their moorings, made them forgetful even of their master's dominance.

With hands upheld in horror too deep for words, Throttalem watched them go. Outside and with a hundred feet put behind him, Kane slowed to a walk, and the ragged crowd, already breathless even in so short a space, fell gratefully into that spiritless, shuffle-footed gait of the down and out.

Here on Pacific Street many of the pavement blocks, though sufficiently sound to still remain in use, bore long cracks, uneven of edge as the result of the great earthquake of recent date. As the little band moved forward, now one, now another, often several in unison, stumbled and almost lost their balance from the striking of their barely lifted boots against these uneven pavement edges. Yet still they moved moochingly along, too lag-

gard of limb from long malnutrition, and too laggard of spirit to change their gait to one of higher lifted feet.

Like all large centres of humanity, and particularly coastal ones, San Francisco's cheap eating houses are legion. In these, in the year 1910, for from ten to twenty cents a man could fill himself with food, which, while coarse, indifferently served and of poor quality, was of sufficient quantity to satisfy temporarily the average long-hungering human stomach.

Into one of the largest of these Kane led the way some two blocks farther on. The proprietor, a burly Greek, lowering of brow, and with that hectoring, suspicious manner which the operation of cheap food "joint" and constant dealings with down and out humanity seems always to conjure, leaped off the tall stool, where he sat behind the cash register, just as the first dozen moved noisily in and began scrambling for seats at the lunch counter running the full length of the room and the first of the dozen oilcloth covered tables filling most of the remaining space of the narrow room. The centre of one of these tables was adorned with a plate piled high with stale bread—served always where a full meal costs but ten cents. Upon this pile several of the vanguard fell with eager haste.

With his eyes now fastened upon the ragged

ones, the Greek forgot the first good impression received, made by Kane and Shaler. They on entering had stepped to the left from the door, allowing the crowd to file in between them and the man at the counter. Now seizing in his hand a catsup bottle the Greek came around the end, and in two jumps reached the table where six of the most fortunate men were seated around the table containing the bread. Already most of the pile had gone, plentifully sprinkled with sugar, the bowl recently containing which now standing empty.

"Hey, you bums!" The proprietor came to a stop at the end of the table, and stood belligerently gazing down upon them while he took tighter grip of the bottle neck and moved it gently to and fro. "You notta eat like dat."

Not quite sure of their position the men glanced furtively and a little uneasily at each other. It is one of the strange quips of human psychology that the number of penniless, desperately hungry men who walk into restaurants, order and eat meals and then face the cashier with the announcement of their inability to pay, is very few; while, on the other hand, the number of men who under similar conditions will commit burglary, or assault and rob merely that they may satisfy their hunger is large in comparison. Yet the culprit knows that for the first action nothing more ter-

rible will happen to him than being kicked into the street, or handed over to the police, to later do probably thirty days, while for either of the second offences he faces stiff sentences of from two to twenty years if caught. Yet the fact remains that to enter a restaurant penniless and eat and later confess seems to require a higher courage than that necessary to committing more dangerous crime.

And now, before the hostile glare and threatening air of the husky Greek, the men were suddenly fear-struck that perhaps after all their sponsor was playing upon them a cruel joke; would now desert them. Their very hang-dog look increased the proprietor's suspicions: that this band, made brave by numbers, had planned to beat him out of a meal. So he rasped out: "I tink you all a lot of bums. You giva your money first or I no taka your order—you no foola dis Greek."

Wild Bill's eyes met Jimmy's. "And one of the big thug's countrymen, perhaps his very ancestor, held Thermopylae! Lord, how modern times and money do change a race!"

Jimmy grinned. Wild Bill's remarks were always of unexpected kind. "You'd better come to the rescue and save a murder," he answered.

"Very well; here goes. It's all right," Kane went on, addressing the proprietor in a voice slightly raised.

A momentary dead hush had fallen, the eyes of every one in the gathering—some seated at lunch counter and some at the tables—had turned upon the Greek and the seated six around the sugar bowl and bread pile. Now, with the millionaire's first uttered word, the interest shifted. The Greek turned uncertainly, then walked back, stopped facing the speaker. "What you mean?"

"I'll pay for all they'll eat. Give them all they can hold."

A faint but plainly audible sound, half gasp of joy, half sigh of muttered relief, came from the crowd. But still the Greek hesitated. The man before him was well dressed; but he was undoubtedly sober! That drunken men are generous, the Greek well knew from past experience. But his small nature, warped the more by long contact with an unChristian world, now made him the more doubtful, for, having had no dealings with young scions of plethoric wealth, he knew naught of their impulsive, self-enjoyed philanthropy. So he repeated: "You giva the monee first." But his voice was civil now, verging close to servile.

"You'll get your money," Kane snapped out, suddenly angry. For a brief second his eyes blazed so fiercely that the Greek involuntarily took a step backward. "Now, hustle up and feed these men, I don't want to be here all night."

Quietly as Kane uttered his command, there was something so compelling and admonitory in his tone that the Greek turned to obey, his fear regarding remuneration now forgotten.

Turning to the first of his ill-favoured guests he began taking their orders, as he did so calling to his assistance a dirty-aproned, tousle-headed youth who had been watching the proceedings from the kitchen doorway.

Selecting a couple of chairs at the head table which was vacant, Kane and Shaler sat down in a position commanding complete view of the feasters, and settled down to enjoyment of the sight; or Kane at least was moved by this feeling.

And sight it was.

Immense quantities of steak and eggs, potatoes, bread, many cups of coffee per man, doughnuts and, lastly, mounds of huge pancakes, soaked in corn syrup of a vast thickness and stickiness, did the diners put away.

With shoulders hunched, bodies bent far forward, mouths held close to their plates and almost on a level with the table top, they sat and gorged. The men ate at a furious pace, a nervous haste and hurry as if fearful of some dire calamity putting an end to the feast before it had yet well begun.

Knives and forks flashed and loudly clattered, the forks carrying loads of meat in chunks cut

far too large, or, again, knife and fork alternated in carrying upward from the plate heaps of German fried potatoes dexterously packed and neatly balanced.

Mouthing rapidly, chewing scarce at all, gulping frenziedly, the men gobbled down the food, making all the room loud with the noise of their feeding, a repast void of gustation, a vast ingurgitation, bestial as primordial creatures in omophagic feast, till at last, unable to cram another mouthful, they sat back in drowsy content, eructating loudly and often the fulness of their satisfaction. Some closed their eyes and dozed in delicious daze, a' torpid blissfulness, half sleep, half day dreams.

Forty-six diners was the official count of the proprietor. Inwardly trembling, for he was overcharging heavily his regular rates, but bold of outward seeming, he rendered his bill for a dollar per plate. To Kane, however, accustomed to food priced on much higher scale, the amount seemed startlingly reasonable.

"I'm going to give them each a dollar for a bed," he remarked to Jimmy.

"That's room rent for a week," Shaler answered.

Kane smiled. "Well, they'll have something left to get breakfast with at that rate. Who

knows it may help them toward hunting up a job."

The crowd though finished, had been too comfortable to move, what of being full-fed and thoroughly warmed through for the first time in many days. Instantly at their benefactor's last announcement, however, they came to their feet; would have swarmed about him, but for his sharp command to fall in line.

Then one by one the shabby line filed past, and went out into the night, each clutching tightly the silver dollar, paper bill, or halves, quarters and smaller silver to the amount of one hundred cents, Kane handed out—he having exchanged a large bill with the Greek for the restaurant's entire capital in small money.

"Well, we've still to find romance," Kane remarked as the last man passed out into the night. "Let's go back to the Thalia and open a couple of bottles of wine by way of a starter, and just to clear our head of all these recent smells."

The evening was by this time well on, it being nearly eleven. Entering the swinging doors of the Thalia fronting on Pacific Street, they stepped beyond the first long bar and upward to a box overlooking the vast dance floor, one of many running about the room, and ordered wine.

Yet romance was lacking. Kane was fully aware of this; but, believing his companion to

be in particularly pessimistic mood, he persisted in ordering pint after pint of wine.

Everywhere were sounds of gaiety—popping corks, brisk music, women's laughter, the swish of dancing feet over a perfect floor under brightest, cheery lights. Fully five hundred people moved in ceaseless array before them, a motley horde, a febrile light in almost every eye, a Bacchanalian crowd, a reversion almost to Phallic days in the abandon with which men and women gave themselves over to the frenzy of the dance.

Still to any but the most unused to city sights, the brilliant scene was but a mockery of true enjoyment. The merriment held hollow ring; the women's laughter, like the wine, the music and the lights, was but a part payment rendered to sensation seekers from many towns and lands, in turn for cash received.

Kane and Shaler lingered long, imbibing many pints, watching a scene often watched before; but nothing affording even commonplace excitement occurred. At last, at Jimmy's repeated urging, they rose and made their way once more onto the street. It was a few minutes after twelve o'clock, and Jimmy suggested home. But Kane, now mildly exhilarated, and in such moments given to perversity, laughed gay refusal.

"Nay; nay, Sir James, 'tis but early; me-

thinks 'twould be unseemly on my part to let you seek the royal bedchamber now with romance still denied, thus proving me a boaster and unfiller of intentions."

Knowing from past experience the futility of appeal or argument with his companion when in such mood, the reporter fell into step beside the millionaire. For some distance they walked without speaking. Suddenly when near to where Pacific Street meets Kearney, Kane halted, attracted by the sound of singing coming up from the wide doorway of a basement "barrel-house," the steps leading to which lay just ahead.

Voices high, quavering, tuneless, were roaring out a sea song vile in its obscenity. Yet in those cracked, unmelodious tones there was something similar and suggestive to the two listeners of a timbre heard a few hours previously. Only in the present instance, the listlessness, the lifelessness and dead apathy of the former singers was replaced by a new key of hysterical jubilation, a wild pæan of animal-like joy such as wine-filled men utter after being long restrained.

"Hark to the animal chorus," Kane cried with a grin. "Let's go down and have a look. If we can't find romance we can at least make a night of it inspecting the different menageries, the wild beasts of the Mission and saloon." Noting how gloomy-faced was Jimmy's acceptance of this

last suggestion, the millionaire chided lightly: "Come, come, Sir James, just think what a valuable education you're getting." Then struck with another idea. "Why not make a Sunday feature story of it?"

Without answer but still acquiescing, Jimmy put his foot on the first downward step, and they descended together.

No stronger, striking or more vivid plea for prohibition could the American continent offer than the "barrel-houses" of San Francisco and many other California cities in the year 1910. "Jimmy The Lug's" barrel-house, down the wide steps of which the two now went, was no exception. A huge rectangular room, perhaps sixty feet long by thirty wide, it held a very tiny bar against the wall on the left. The remaining wall space, from the end of the bar to the end of the room was filled with hogsheads piled one upon another to the roof. Each and all were filled with native wine. Lacking of age, bitter of taste, fermented under cheap conditions, the contents of each and all could indeed lay just claim to being among the vilest vintages known to man. Only a step or two from the kegs began the chairs and tables; the tables of iron, with small round tops of imitation marble, the chairs made of wood, cheap affairs and rickety, two to four ranged about each table. These tables and

chairs filled practically all the remaining space of the low-roofed room. The air was thick with tobacco vapour, stranglingly strong. The whole place was permeated with odours heavy, dank, the indescribable smell of a bar room robbed of the cleansing sweetness of warm sunlight and proper ventilation. The floor was several inches deep with sawdust, so that the sound of moving feet was oddly muffled.

And there seated around tables in the centre of the room, a drink mad, motley gathering, were the forty-six men who two short hours ago Kane had fed and presented with a dollar each for lodgings. But such is the magic of alcohol that these cringing enervates apathetic, soulless scum were metamorphosed.

For potency, the bitter red wine of the California barrel-houses would be hard to equal. It quickly exhilarates the drinker, then causes numbness of the senses, a complete atrophy.

This first stage was now at its height upon the gathering. Gods for brief moment these down and outers were. Before each man a pint pewter measure stood, from which they drank at rapid intervals. Even as Jimmy came to a stop immediately at the foot of the stairway and surveyed the scene, half-a-dozen of the trenchmen rose and hurried to the bar to lay down a nickel for a fresh pint of wine.

Five cents a pint for a quickly coming nepenthe! Five cents a pint—and at their command joyous thrillings, vast titillations, a brain on fire and acrawl, glorious brief sensations, then numbness and hours of blissful atrophy, a far speeding from the cares and harsh realities of a world they found at all times bitter; five cents and Paradise was theirs! Who is there among the kindlier treated, more fortunate, that will deny the justness of their actions?

Looking upon them in this their hour upon the heights, Kane was oddly stirred. There came to him a feeling different from that of an hour ago when he had looked upon them in the Mission.

Why, why, why, were such men as these? Were they themselves alone accountable for becoming the vile creatures they had sunk to be? Or were they, as Jimmy, with his fatalistic philosophy believed, but impotent human pawns in an ordered scheme of things, doomed by Divine and Predestined law to hold the places occupied? If the latter, then the Deity was unfair!

In the wake of these thoughts, there came to Kane that saying he had heard so often repeated: that all men were born equal. Yes; he admitted, all men *were* born equal—conceived in passion, by pain delivered. But now he saw that here the parallel ended, and the inequality began. Some men there were equipped for life with keen wits,

strong brains and bodies, or even, robbed of such attributes, were fortified by inherited wealth piled up long before. While on the other hand were the weaklings, the puny children of the race, the dull brains, the abnormal and ill-formed, the poverty-oppressed offspring of the down-trodden masses—what chance had they?

Then he thought of himself: the other side of the riddle. He was of the master breed; but by whose agency? Certainly not his own. Was he but a higher piece upon life's chessboard, moving in appointed groove by behest and bidding of unseen power? Perhaps Jimmy was right.

But Kane had never been given to philosophic questioning; and the unusual ponderings of the moment fled before the coming of an anger at these men for what he considered a gross misuse of his bounty. He sprang across the floor, halting within two feet of the first line of tables where the men were seated, with Jimmy following slower.

"You miserable beggars!" His voice rang out cutting and contemptuous.

A hush fell, surprising in abruptness. Forty-six pairs of bloodshot eyes concentrated on the speaker from the floor of the barrel-house, while the two bartenders on duty turned interested glance in Kane's direction.

"Why any man with any get to him," the mil-

lionaire proceeded, "even with the little start I gave you to-night, would have found a bed, and had enough left over to help him to start out and find a job." He stopped as quickly as he had begun his speech, one given in absolute sincerity; and no consciousness of irony came to him, who had never earned a dollar in his life, at the situation. His personal feelings on the subject satisfied by his tirade, he turned to go, but halted, remained facing what had now become a yapping pack. The wine was in them strong. Forty-six men of reddened eyes glared a class hate. The chemistry of the grape stirred their beings to unwonted energy. In half-a-dozen brains, keener than the rest, there leaped simultaneously a kindred picture—the memory of Kane's roll of bills, exhibited to them so short a time ago.

Throaty whispers passed quickly from man to man. Then as one individual moving, they leaped toward their benefactor.

"Back to the stairs," Jimmy yelled, for once taking command, as Kane, such was his contempt of the men before him, stood unmoving, utterly taken aback at this show of spirit.

So immense, indeed, was Kane's surprise that Jimmy added action to his words by catching the millionaire's sleeve and jerking him half around.

Across the room they went, in three leaps gaining the bottom of the steps. Here three of

the mob, fleetier than the rest, caught up to them. The first, throwing himself forward sprawlingly, caught Jimmy just below the hips in a forward dive, and brought the newspaperman down, to strike heavily on the stairs. In the next minute they were locked in wrestling embrace, the man struggling to keep him to the floor, Jimmy vainly struggling to be free.

With a swiftness surprising in so big a man, Wild Bill whirled about as clutching fingers caught his coat. His right fist shot home with all the driving power of his two hundred and ten pounds behind it, and the second man, hit square upon the jaw just below the ear, was lifted off his feet, his grasping fingers relaxed their hold upon the other's coat, and he went down in a limp heap. Immediately following, and so lightning quick as to be seem instantaneous, his left fist mashed the face of the third man most advanced, and he went down. The oncoming rush of the followers was for the moment stayed. The men hesitated, stood bunched together.

At Kane's feet his companion and the man were locked in furious wrestle. Brave and great fighter as he was, Kane realised the impossibility of winning out. The open street above and a running fight for safety was the only course. Yet to free Jimmy was dangerous work; to do it he must drop his guard against this crowd

ready and eager to spring, for all their secondary hesitation. Then an idea came, its fulfilment possible to such a man as himself gifted with more than ordinary strength.

With movement rapid he stooped, caught Jimmy—for the moment on top—by the seat of the trousers and the coat collar, and lifting him and his tight holding adversary he took the first ascending step of the stairs, holding the two at half arm's length before him on a level with his stomach.

But as he took the third step the men behind were in full cry, emitting queer beast noises, throaty growlings and yammering, born of the excitement of the chase.

Still Kane would have covered the remaining steps and reached the street ahead, where lay promise of patrolling policemen's interference, and safety, but for the treacherous footing. Half way up he slipped on step made slippery by some sickened creature of the day. He staggered; a moment wavered wildly, then losing balance as his feet went from under him he slid backward into the very arms of the eager men. A snarling, clumsy-moving, yet effective body they threw themselves upon their prostrate quarry.

Kane at least had one advantage: he struck and kicked with all the fury of despairing

strength. Each blow told, while such was the press, the others' blows as often landed on friend as foe. But weight and numbers tell in the end in a rough and tumble fight. A score of boots and fists again found place upon the millionaire's face, head and body. Blows beat blood into his eyes. A vast singing filled his ears. Blood filled his nostrils and clogged his breathing. A million tons seemed pressing down upon him. Then all the world went black.

And near at hand, poor Jimmy, valiant, though weak, had even more quickly been reduced to insensibility.

Their quarry's movements stilled, the men gathered close around. Then, just when two self-appointed ringleaders were about to turn to the looting of their victims in best approved Barbary Coast fashion, they were interrupted by the arrival of the two husky bartenders. No errand of relief or mercy theirs. In silence they had held aloof until the fight was won. Now, sensing rich prize and fearless of the mob by reason of their fighting powers and ability to whistle up police aid if too hard pressed, they leaped to claim the unconscious men for their own.

Down upon the spoilers, about to begin their work, the bartenders came. One blow from the stout bungstarter each held in his right hand,

and the leaders went to the floor. Catching Kane and Shaler by the coat collar each man began rapidly dragging them toward the bar door.

So unexpected was the attack that the crowd shrank back. The sharp action of the proceeding minutes with its attached great exertion and the dying effect of recent libations, all conspired to rob them of their first furious fire. So they stood dazed for the moment without power of action, till the invaders were well on the way to the bar's end. Only then did their numbing brains rouse to control. Brave by numbers they turned to follow with unsteady steps and retrieve their prey, but too late; the bartenders had drawn their captives behind the bar.

And the bartenders, once behind their short stretch of wooden-fronted citadel, were much more formidable enemies than Kane and Jimmy had been out in the open. There were just two ways in which the "stiffs" could attack: by climbing over the breast-high bar, or making a rush through the narrow swinging doorway which closed the one and only entrance, the other end of the bar being against the solid wall. Neither of these alternatives was encouraging as the bartenders had free and unhampered use of hands to wield bungstarter and bottle, while the attackers for the first part of the rush would be entirely engaged in climbing the bar's side, or

breaking through the doorway, and thus open to the defenders' blows, before they could come to the close grips so desirable if a mob is to win against a few. This and the caution of fearful knowledge that the saloon men and the police were as brothers now stayed further attack. So they took themselves off up the stairs, with noisy shuffling feet and hurling multitudinous anathemas against the robbers still alert behind their citadel.

The minute the last man had gone, "Jimmy The Lug," a huge, ox-like Irish-American, proprietor as well as bartender, made haste to open a door standing back of the bar, and dragged both Kane and Shaler into a small room it led into, closing the door after him, leaving his bartender without on guard,

CHAPTER THREE

Concerning the Idiosyncrasy of "Jimmy the Lug"

IN the language of the underworld the word "lug" has assumed a somewhat wide meaning peculiar to certain words in the argot of crime. Thus variously, lug means to borrow from, or, in wider sense to take from. Thus, for example, a penniless underworld member speculating on the possibility of future riches for himself, might remark: "And then all my friends will be around to lug me." Again, the owner of a questionable resort, telling a friend of the extortionate amount of money demanded for protection from some new precinct captain of police, would express himself: "That captain is sure putting the lug on me," or "He is lugging me good and plenty."

In the case of "Jimmy The LUG"—his Christian name long forgotten, if, for that matter, it had ever been known along the Barbary Coast—he had drawn his title for his propensity of taking from his patrons on occasion everything they had, themselves included.

Entering his little room with his two inert vic-

tims on the floor at his feet, "Jimmy The Lug" was about to exact the first of his salvage when Kane, strong of fibre and therefore rapid in rallying consciousness, moved slightly. In another minute he would have been himself again, but for the "Lug's" quick action. With the bungstarter still in his hand he tapped sharply the man's head, not too hard, not too softly, but just exactly right was the blow. The "Lug" had learned from long years of practice how to disable men without doing them serious hurt; for in addition to his saloon business he had a paying sideline, requiring skill at times in rendering men as helpless clay in his hands.

Now with quick, sure hands he ran through Kane's clothes. No inch of his body was overlooked, or one possession, even to a pencil. Watch, wallet, card case, penknife, money, cuffs, and all the other things his pockets contained were tossed upon the table. Jimmy, in his turn, was plucked. The work concluded, the despoiler, without a second glance, swept the whole collection into the drawer of a small table occupying the centre of the room. This done, he once more turned his attention to the prostrate pair. With rapid movement he stripped them in turn of every last vestige of clothing, several times emitting little grunts of satisfaction at the feel of the

silken underwear or as he dwelt upon the excellence of the suitings and boots.

Just as he finished, Jimmy showed signs of reviving, and again the "Lug" applied the bung-starter, but this time with tap more gentle, as his experienced eyes noted the lesser physique of his man. The "Lug" was a master judge of human constitutions.

The wall 'phone at the opposite side of the room next occupied his attention. For several moments he held terse and cryptic conversation with some person answering to the name of "The Snail."

Twenty minutes later, reclad in a pair of blue overalls and a coarse seaman's shirt, Wild Bill Kane, master of millions, and James P. Shaler—thus he signed himself on the dramatic page to which he had so recently been appointed—were loaded into a covered car from the alley door of "Jimmy The Lug's," and went jolting away down many streets grown quiet with the lengthening night.

It was not until perhaps two hours after getting his human freight off his hands that "The Lug" turned once more to his little den behind the bar. Standing with hand upon the knob, preparatory to entering, he remarked to his bartender, with considerable satisfaction: "Well, things turned out better'n I expected. I was

thinking about the two men 'The Snail' was short when that gang of stew bums blew in. I'd picked out the two likeliest looking stiffes, but they hadn't got drunk enough when them two flossy boys stepped in and spilled the beans. Still, now I see everything worked for the best."

The bartender grunted an inarticulate assent, and "The Lug," his curiosity more aroused than usual stepped inside, closing and locking the door that was void of any keyhole.

While this was not exactly according to underworld ethics, where a fifty-fifty split of spoils, with all the participants present to see no mistake is made in the division, the bartender on the outside was too wise from long service in this one spot to complain. As he had often times in the past sagely imparted in strictest confidence to a friend: "Of course, 'The Lug' always takes the first count on the dough, an' yu kin jest bet he don't overlook hisself; but then his joint is a good place to work in, an' my bit ain't so small at that month in and month out; an' he pays good wages besides; an' he's so strong wid the bulls, yu kin alus figger no matter how strong the beef against the joint that you'll be protected." All of which, judged by the standard of ethics on the Barbary Coast, was good sound logic.

Within the room, "The Lug" drew up his chair, emptied the contents of the drawer upon the

table, and began methodically arranging and appraising his haul.

There was something of the artist in "The Lug." Always to such a task as now before him he sat down with a secret thrill, a more than mere gross joy in the intrinsic value of the spoil. A something that certainly should have had no place in his mountain of flesh and heavy mind, yet still existed. There never was any telling just what one might meet up with, he always said to himself. It was an interesting adventure always; and many a strange thing had he gleaned from the pockets of past guests to this little back room. But where the real joy lay was not in the possession, but the anticipation, the secret wondering and speculation which he had come to attach to this end of the work. Unconsciously this joying in speculating had grown upon him till of late years it had resulted in his forming a most peculiar habit. Often after the first hasty stripping of a victim he had swept the spoils into the drawer of the little table. Here letting them lie for days before making more careful examination, in all the intervening time enjoying himself hugely in the speculation, finding a peculiar pleasure in delaying the final examination, after the fashion of a person taking a long walk to whet his appetite.

Thus in the first stripping of his victims, "The Lug" always did the work hurriedly, though

thoroughly and effective in that nothing was overlooked, giving each object hardly a glance before tossing it into the drawer. As the most unusual treasures generally came to light through pocket books, pouches, purses and other receptacles, the plucking process in no way robbed the later tranquil examination of its thrills.

To-night, however, the pickings had been so remarkably rich in suggestion, even to his casual glance, that "The Lug" had been unable to resist returning soon, though at first his resolve had been to let them lie a day.

As always, "The Lug" on the present occasion, sorted everything after an orderly system all his own. Suddenly, some fifteen minutes after sitting down, he jerked back sharply in his chair. The card held a moment ago in his hand dropped with a faint sound upon the wooden table top. Not in years had "The Lug" been so stirred.

"By the holy salted mackerel! By the holy salted mackerel!" This repeating of his favourite phrase—used only on the most momentous occasions, and then seldom repeated—evidenced how deeply he was moved.

After a long and motionless silence he grunted, "I wisht I'd knowd. Disappearin' millionaires an' Wild Bill Kane of all of them sure ain't no good luck to no one." He sat pondering gravely. Once he even made to reach for the 'phone, then

shook his head. The millionaire by now was beyond reach. This brought a second thought. Before the humour this conveyed his seriousness suddenly vanished. His huge, fat-padded frame began shaking with soft laughter. He gurgled low in his throat, the sound like spouting water in overburdened eavestrough.

At last, after several mirth-filled moments, he wheezed in short-breathed ecstasy: "By the holy salted mackerel, that's a bear. Shanghaing Wild Bill Kane on one of his own ships!"

The joke was too good for keeping, but the 'phone being an unsafe means for communicating such important news, he merely again held light conversation with the mysterious person, "The Snail" by name, requesting his attendance.

"The Snail" having concluded activities for the time being, promised to arrive shortly, so "The Lug" sat back, lit a cigar, and fell to congratulating himself on this affiliation with waterfront crimp which these last few years had been a most profitable connection as, in addition to what he found on each victim, he drew from the crimp a half of the advance money paid for the delivering of each human body fit for work aboard ship.

And this pleasant cogitation helped to banish the first uneasiness arising out of the kidnapping of so high a one as Kane of the house of Kane, famous in California for close upon a century.

CHAPTER FOUR

In Which Clash Men of the Master Breed

OF all the hell-ships that ever passed out the Golden Gate to the wide world beyond, none quite approached the *Ena*. She was supreme of her kind; out-helled all others by widest margin.

Built in 1860 as a coasting packet she had done faithful service as such for thirty years, coming into the possession of John Kane in his early business days. Kane though no sailorman had been shrewd and practical, having that ability of the master breed to gather around him men of useful, though less executive powers than himself. Thus, while knowing nothing of the sea, his coastal and whaling ships had always been paying propositions, just as had everything on land—farms, mines and mills.

The *Ena's* usefulness ended in her first capacity, Kane, acting upon the sound advice of his port captain, had remodelled her for the whaling trade.

Three inches of sheathing of hardwood upon the vessel, with an added reinforcement of iron plate on bow and stern, the bow further braced

and strengthened by being backed inside with many feet of solid timber and the sides' resistance increased by a heavy layer of rock salt in between the timbers and the skin of the ship, with a further inside sheathing several inches thick, and the *Ena* became once more a vessel worthy of a name. Rather, perhaps, it should be said she was once more made capable of bringing continued wealth to the house of Kane.

Shortly before Wild Bill had come into possession of his ready-made estate, the *Ena* had been chartered to a noted whaler, "Devil" Maclean, on a share basis, he having lost his own vessel, it being crushed in an ice floe of Behring Sea.

In an era when brutal captains were the rule rather than the exception, "Devil" Maclean still was notorious for his barbarous cruelty. In addition he had won large fame among men of the sea through the number of his unusual and daring escapades. By turns sealer, opium smuggler, runner of Chinese immigrants into the United States and Canada, this latter work without the payment of the Oriental head tax, Maclean had proved himself the most daringly reckless, the most resourceful and inventive schemer of the many engaged in callings questionable. But with gathering years he had turned to the respectable and within-the-law calling of whaling.

But to Wild Bill the *Ena* was only a name, and

its present master, if known at all, utterly forgotten; for all his estate's shipping was attended to by a capable port captain, whom Kane seldom saw and with whose work he never had bothered.

The *Ena* was a topsail schooner, also carrying amidships an auxiliary engine capable of driving the ship at a maximum speed of about six knots an hour. Through the buffets of arctic seas and pinching in recent ice she leaked, requiring men at the pumps in times of heavy weather. The fo'castle floor was often inches deep in water; at times the lower bunks even being flooded. So small was the fo'castle that even the tiny stove and table it contained monopolized so much of the floor space as to force the men to keep to their bunks. The place was dark and damp and foul from utter lack of ventilation, dampness and dirt—a glorious breeding spot for disease among an arctic dwelling crew. Yet such quarters were the rule rather than the exception on many whalers plying the dangerous waters of the arctic.

Slowly and through seeming eons of infinite pain Wild Bill returned to life. His whole body ached, a unison of agony, yet at the same time each individual muscle, cord and sinew retained a separate stab and hurt all its own.

For several seconds, even after fullest consciousness was his, he lay very still, trying dizzily

to collect thoughts together in a brain that seemed a throbbing drum. For all his wildness, and many past debauches, he had never before suffered an utter lapse from the world like this. Strong of frame, he had taken as much liquor, generally more than his companions of the hour, and still clung to a vague semblance of memory of events during these periods of conviviality. Thus this present awakening was fraught with wonder. His first realization was of the muffled throb of machinery and of movement, a faint surging forward as of a ship travelling on quiet sea or within the confines of the harbour. Carefully he raised his eyelids, experiencing a vast heaviness as though they were weighed with lead, for "The Snail" always given to much precaution, had added chloroform to the treatment of his unconscious victims during their ride through the city.

Presently the vision of a double row of bunks, a stove and table became clear to him, the whole dreary effect heightened by the dim glow of a still burning sea lamp swinging in the centre of the place. His next impression was the smells—hanging odours of quarters inhabited by forever unwashed men, of greasy sweat-soaked clothes, of oil skins and dirty standing salt water, and several others unfamiliar to his nostrils.

So acute, however, was his suffering, he closed

his eyes again, while a faint nausea set the world to reeling. Now came remembrance of the fight in the saloon, followed quickly by dull wonder, then speculation as to where he was. Thought of his companion moved him finally to action. He sat up sharply. A groan, involuntarily wrung, burst from his lips. He fell back again. Instantaneously with that move a thousand splitting, darting pains racked his head. Every part of his framework added varied kinds of protests, running the whole gamut of human cricks, aches and stabbing ills.

"Methinks I've been playing door mat for an elephant," Kane voiced aloud, his eternally buoyant spirits rising over mere physical ailings. But even his speech he noticed, like everything else at the moment, made unnatural sounding, a thickness, a peculiar articulation, as that of a hair-lipped man. Defying the pain it brought, he raised his right hand and stroked his face, discovering puffs and bumps and mounds in surprising number and size. Finding the pain less acute in his arm after once moving, he turned it around slowly for some seconds. He repeated this with his left. Finally with tightly clenched teeth he essayed and succeeded in rising to a sitting position. As he did so, a faint groan from the next lower bunk attracted his attention. He could not

see the occupant as the space between was boarded.

With infinite slowness Kane lifted one leg then the other clear of the bunk and set foot on the floor, a matter of a dozen inches. Instantly both feet were coldly wet, the water covering his feet. Clutching the railing of the upper bunk he took a tentative, uncertain step, then another until he was opposite the middle of the next one. Again intense suffering met the action of bending forward and down; but he brought his head below the edge of the upper bunk, and stared into the lower one.

Jimmy Shaler met his gaze, lying on his stomach, a huddled heap just as he had been thrown there. His right arm, curved inward, pillowed his bruised and battered face upon which the blood had congealed in several places. His feet were bare and in the thin overalls and coarse cloth shirt he now wore, not even his best friend would have recognised him as the neat and careful Jimmy.

"My God, Jimmy!" In Kane's cry was great emotion; a stricken note was there, but underlying it a deeper, dangerous, fibrous something, like the snarl of a huge beast rousing to action.

The reporter lay so still that, filled with fear Kane crawled in beside him, felt for a heart beat, found it, and breathed easier. But as his hand

lay against the bare skin he was startled by the feverish heat of it.

With gentle touch he straightened out Jimmy's slight five feet eight of form and, half raising him with one hand, first under the arms, then the hips, Kane worked from under him the mouldy, strong smelling blanket, and covered him with it. For several minutes he watched anxiously, frightened by the condition of his so frail companion, but quickly realising that action other than sitting here would be more conducive to remedying both their conditions he rose. Now, and for the first time, he noted that all the other bunks, save that one above Jimmy held men, either drugged or sleeping. A sharp suspicion seized him. His brain had cleared fast; was once more normal as he surveyed the room with comprehensive eye.

Hurriedly turning he went on deck. San Francisco loomed behind him. Day had dawned. Over Alcatraz way a ferry boat sent out a long shrill call. Ahead the Golden Gate was widening out. Point Bonita was rapidly growing closer. Kane realised with sudden fear that soon the California coast might be lost to sight.

It struck him as doubly strange that the deck should be so deserted. Under the spell of his emotions Kane neither noted that he shivered, as the keen May wind cut through his scarecrow

clothes, nor how shaky were his movements. On bare and soundless feet, his gait at once fitting to the faint roll of the ship, he walked aft, climbed the port ladder to the poop and came face to face with the man at the wheel.

Then gently, deeming friendly tone the best method of approach, Kane said good humouredly: "I say, old man, what ship is this, and where's she bound for?"

The man met his gaze squarely. Instead of answering the question put, he laughed, an oddly harsh articulating, and said, roughly bantering: "Well, look who's here!" Then, not without a touch of toleration, for Kane's bulk loomed large and strong in the grey light, he added: "I wasn't expecting any of the crew so early awake; outside of you they look like a poor lot."

The man spoke very low, his voice soft, an odd purring toning, the accent stilted and marked by that indefinable slurring of words and lingering on some particular vowel or letter peculiar to the Highland Scotch.

Something in his appearance told Kane that he was no mere sailor. He was as tall as himself, his shoulders slightly broader, chunky, asymmetrical, slightly stooped, but indicative of great strength. Silently the millionaire measured his man, the square face, great of nose, and the thin firm lips of the smallest of mouths. He was clean shaven.

Under his cap showed the edge of a grizzled thatch of red hair. But it was his keen, flashing eyes, staring now with a faint light of belligerence, and commandingly out from underneath heavy overhanging brows that impressed Kane the most.

But quickly the thought of his position returned. All forgetting the fashion of his attire, and his face now almost hideous from the pounding of the night before, he took a step closer. "Answer my question," he snapped. "I'm Kane, William Kane, of the shipping firm of that name in San Francisco. You must recognise the name, being a seaman. Anyway, I've no intention of being shanghaied on this or any vessel." He took another step, putting himself on the other side of the wheel, so the wheelman stood half facing him.

Aware of his disadvantage at thus being at the wheel in case of attack, and with long years of experience at sea having brought him in contact with many mad men, which certainly this ragged giant was from his just made announcement, the steersman said in tone soothing and placatory: "This is the schooner *Ena*. I'm Captain Maclean."

For the moment the name of the ship brought no particular meaning to Kane. Then suddenly, with one of those odd twists of memory that are

part of the strangeness of the human mind, came remembrance. Struck with the monstrous irony of the situation he took a step back, in the same instant conscious how numbly cold he was becoming.

"Shanghaied on my own ship," he thought bitterly. And, catching sight of his bare feet, "not a chance in the world to be believed"; for his keen perception now brought realisation of the meaning of the Captain's indulgent bearing.

Silently Kane stood staring. With his knowledge of ships and navigation it now struck him how strange, how odd was the present situation: this skipper, solitary figure on moving ship, conning his own vessel out to the open sea, with the tide, under the grey of the morning, while in the fo'castle lay his sorry, stolen crew, as drunken, drugged and beaten a lot of human scum as ever graced a vessel. But where were the others? Kane asked himself—the mates at least should be about.

The truth of the matter was that never had Maclean left port in such a way. His two "boat-steerers" had come aboard howling drunk just half an hour before sailing time, and promptly taken to their bunks. The crew, too, late delivered, and every single one crimp-gathered, had been thrown aboard at the last minute, drugged to silence. Not one man in the entire twelve now

gathered in the fo'castle had signed articles, or even knew of being aboard. But this was the usual method on the good ship *Ena*. Articles, after all, were not of much importance. These were best signed at sea, according to Maclean's and the crimp's way of reasoning. It mattered little to the crew, for through Devil Maclean's system of slop-chest charges, and the fact that the voyage was on shares instead of wages should it prove an unsuccessful one, and on poor wages if the catch was large—Maclean never settling this matter till the home port was near—by reason of this there was more chance of every man finding himself in debt at the end of the voyage than having any sum due him.

In the present sailing, true to his Highland nature, Maclean, brooking no delay of leaving port at the appointed hour, had sent his mates and the cook below to fire and work the engine, a labour none to their liking, with the exception of the first mate, his brother, who, on so small a ship as the *Ena* where recourse was seldom had to the steam power, served in the capacity of engineer.

Unaware, however, of all these circumstances, Kane stood for perhaps a minute cogitating on the unusualness of the situation, and trying to form some plan of action that would have the

best chance of being successful under the apparent circumstances around him.

He noted the sea was smooth, no vessel in line with their tack, and with only the man at the wheel apparently to contend with, he made decision—if he could knock this man out it would be easy to take the wheel and turn the ship toward the nearest shore, or about and make for Alcatraz Island.

Forgetful of all pains, his numbness and weakened condition, he sprang close to his adversary and sent a vicious right fist toward the captain's face.

Unexpected though the action was, Devil Maclean, seasoned fighter that he was, had still been fairly alert. Covering up in the nick of time he fended off the blow with left arm swiftly crooked, and, with the same action, lunged a strong right in return. Carried forward by the force of his own blow and a sudden unexpected roll of the ship sharply yawing with the release of the wheel, Kane caught the captain's blow full force over the heart. He stood wavering a second, then staggered back, both arms covering up and taking on the attack of Maclean, now quick to follow up so soon won advantage.

And now Kane, a shoe-wearer all his life, realised what handicap it was to be barefooted on the rough planked deck of this ill-kept whaler. Some-

how he no longer was sure of himself; a queer, ungovernable tentativeness governed all his steps.

So, moving awkwardly, he backed away before the captain's fierce onslaught, and brought up sharply against the rail, for moving backward he had taken no note of his going.

And now they fought unmoving, a close-up furious slugging match. Fists of each, like hammers driven, found place on arm and chest and face. Only men stoutly made could have weathered such lacing. Soon gone was Wild Bill's stiffness. Forgotten became his feet before the seeing red aroused by battle, and each landed blow of the other called forth from him redoubled effort. Perhaps a full minute they stood there foot to foot like ancient sluggers on an English green. But the very feeling of the nearness of the rail was hampering Kane.

Watching his opening he sprang clear to one side. Then he circled, to again come close; and again for long seconds it was blow for blow, then back away.

One well placed rap from Maclean's knuckles and Kane's left eye went closed; another, by virtue of ring clad finger, split his lip and opened his cheek from the mouth to curve of upper jaw. But Kane fought on heedless of the pain, even his unshod feet carrying to his brain no tale of pain though the soles of each had gathered up many

slivers, some inches long. Made oblivious in the fury of the fight to all hurt and suffering, he was no longer a creature of the great city, a person of wealth, refinement, a dweller in well-ordered clubs, but a snarling thing, ruled by jungle instincts, clawing, brutish, eager to batter down that other snarling thing before him, to leap upon it, and beat down and rend and tear. Unknown deeps, waked by combat's inhiation, called strange thoughts forth, so that as he battled on, his one good eye became fixed upon his opponent's open and mighty throat; and he champed his white strong teeth, perfect molars of flesh-tearing carnivora, while over and over there sang in his brain wild refrain: "Let me close with him now, and sink home my teeth, and I'll tear out his jugular vein!"

Maclean, master of many a sea fight, always cool, watchfully alert, had still in all his days never faced such a foe; for the millionaire, though not a careful liver, had taken thorough course in the manly art from some of San Francisco's toughest, cleverest bruisers—than which city is no finer breeding ground for fighters. And he outweighed Maclean by fifteen pounds, and his combative powers were further enhanced by that same element which makes all cornered animals doubly dangerous.

To succeed meant freedom, or at least held

forth the possibility. So Kane, out of condition though he was, battered, bruised and weary, went staggering on about this little portion of the deck, with spirit strong, though slowly his vigour ebbed—and ever in his brain that lustful-savage cry, and his eye, madly eager fastened upon the other's throat.

But upon Kane, already weary at the start, the pace soon told. Too, under red rage's bidding all caution fled. An idea became an obsession till presently he charged upon his man with hands outreaching, fingers prehensile, tensed clawlike as some furious bird of prey. It was a fatal charge. Maclean's right, backed by all the weight of perhaps two hundred pounds, sought and found desired spot upon the point of Kane's jaw, and he went reeling back. Yet such was his brute tenacity, his will to consciousness and continued fight, that his mighty frame did not fall; instead he stood swaying like some giant tree cut through but still not downed. His arms went up in shaky, weak defence, an action instinctive. Then Maclean, with an agility and swiftness remarkable in one grey of hair, gave a hop and a step and launched himself a good twelve inches in the air, kicking out and high his right foot, his left vertical to make perfect his alighting—the famous "hitch-and-kick" of the Canadian bushmen of the lower Ottawa, learned by Maclean long ago from

French-Canadian woodsmen in his boyhood days on far-distant Nova Scotia farm.

Struck squarely in the stomach Kane went down. Then, to complete the victory, Maclean with an unwonted and unchivalrous ferocity dealt his prostrate adversary a heavy kick upon the head close to the temple, and Kane lay very still, his body swaying faintly to the roll of the ship.

Twenty minutes later he came to. The former return to consciousness down in the fo'castle had been agony; but now he suffered an exquisiteness of torture compared to which the earlier pain was nothing. The lying on the hard deck so scantily clad in the chill damp air of the morning had intensified every ache and bruise.

A minute he lay so overwhelmed with pain and nausea that the question rose within him if he could rise. Only a moment this lingered. Through his massive frame, through every tissue, corpuscle, cord and muscle once more thrilled new energy, new fire and eagerness, born of the unquenchable, unkillable, unbreakable spirit that was his heritage from generations of willers and doers, a race of conquerors, lords and looters of lands and high seas, masters and drivers of men. The brain, the blood, the stamina of rulers coursed full his veins. He was of the mighty born, of the breed who will not be stayed.

He sat straight up; another move and he was

upon his feet, though in the doing no convict of old, damned to the rack, ever suffered more.

His recent adversary was gone from the wheel. In his place was a man who, viewed from the rear, was Maclean's replica, save for a slight variation in his dress.

Kane eyed him silently. Dully comprehension came how useless it was to further fight; too, as he caught sight of the cheap blue overalls flapping around his bare legs, and gazed upon his bare feet in which the many slivers were now making themselves felt, the millionaire was fully aware how futile it would be to again proclaim himself. No one would believe. Fast upon the heels of these reflections, his keen wits took new tack. Brain must win where brawn could not.

Turning he walked slowly to the port ladder, descended to the deck. Here just emerging from his cabin under the poop—where on the *Ena* were also the quarters of the mates and "boatsteerers"—Kane came face to face with his recent antagonist.

Without any preamble Kane said: "I want sea-boots, some socks, underwear and oilskins." He couched the request in tones respectful, but there was that in his manner bespeaking equal addressing equal.

Devil Maclean eyed him appraisingly. Here before him was certainly a sailor to gladden the

heart of any master. In the pleasure of the contemplation he almost forgot his left eye now tightly closed, a bruised and swollen lower lip, and sundry other painful spots.

"Jueversail?"

Kane shook his head. As they stood, his knowledge of theoretical navigation was perhaps equal to Maclean's; but of the handling of ropes and canvas, he had no understanding.

"Well, you an' the rest of this hell's crew'll learn soon enough. Without another word he turned and entered the store room, and served out a supply of things requested, which, at *Ena* prices would take Wild Bill several months to pay for.

With his arms full, Kane made his way to the fo'castle. He was anxious about Jimmy. His worst fears were more than anticipated, for as he splashed into the room, the floor now even deeper in water than before as the ship moved in rougher sea, he caught the sound of the reporter's voice in the incoherent and rambling jargon of delirium.

Throwing his things hastily in his own bunk, Kane sat down beside Jimmy, resting his hand on the feverish brow of his partner. For a moment or two the reporter ceased his muttering and his tossing, only to break forth again. His eyes were

wide open now, but gazing glazedly with glassy incomprehension.

A few minutes later, while Kane still sat engaged in his efforts at soothing, the two mates entered the fo'castle. The first, Sandy Maclean, a brother of the skipper, just relieved from the wheel, was so astonishingly like in feature to the captain that in the gloom of the place Kane for a moment mistook him. The second mate was shorter of stature, a strange appearing man. Abnormally broad of shoulder and thick-set of body, tremendous of head, his nose spatulate, little, lashless red-rimmed eyes, almost hairless brows, and square face covered with coarse red-brown hair sticking straight out from the skin with the peculiar aggressiveness of a bristling animal, he more resembled a great ape than a man. His simian appearance was further heightened by arms of an unnatural length which, in repose, reached below his knees, the hands great-fingered and covered with a heavy coating of red-brown hair. As he came swinging into view he raised his voice in unison with Sandy Maclean, a harsh and throaty bellow more like beast sound of the jungle than cry of man, a cry so tremendous in volume as to drown even the powerful voice of the first mate.

It at once affected some inner chord in the body of the delirium-ridden Jimmy, for he sat up

wildly. Gently but forcibly Kane pushed him down again, pressing cool hands upon his brow. But for the next five minutes Kane had to exert himself to hold down his companion suddenly strong with the strength of fevered madness.

And while Kane sat so occupied there was enacted before his eyes a scene of the sea new to him, one so refined of brutality that only remembrance of the futility and senselessness of further fighting on his part held him back from interference.

One after another the inmates of the bunks were dragged forth and thrown on the watery floor. Now, through the passing of hours the effects of drug and liquor had passed away. Consciousness came with the soaking in the chilling brine; and the mates, with body blows, kicks and forcibly delivered open-handed slaps on one then the other side of the men's faces, drove the be-draggled crew upon the deck.

Yet, despite the businesslike cruelty with which the two conducted their work, and which at first roused Kane's anger, he found his sympathy for this sorry crew detracted from, because they were such a spineless lot. With wails, protestations, servile pleadings, even grovelings, they received their unearned blows. Not one single flash of gameness had there showed in the whole ten. They lacked even the pitiable spirit of the

snapping cur, that will on occasion leap at the hand which wields the trainer's whip. Ten men they stood to two; yet, all marshalled on the deck they were more subservient than before, though one well concentrated rush, a little nerve and determination, a few well placed blows and the ship could have been theirs. But no; they cringed—broken, lifeless, fawning.

And again to Kane, as he later watched, there came the same queer thrilling of the night when he had looked upon just such another gang as this in the Mission and the saloon, a thrilling that he was of different clay. Yet immediately in the wake of this, by reason of his sudden philosophising, this feeling which thrilled him was no longer merely a thing of pride; mingled now, and this most strongly, came a feeling of thankfulness that he was as he was. And again he wondered whether men were masters of their fate, or if Jimmy was right in his contention of the helplessness of all human clay in the hands of the Unknown.

With the last of the crew driven through the fo'castle door, the second mate followed, leaving Sandy Maclean to round up the remaining Kane and Jimmy. Evidently words had passed between the captain and his brother, Kane decided, for though the mate addressed him now in gruff

tones, there was that in it which suggested a desire for temporary peace.

That such action on the part of man-driving mates and captain was foreign to the practice of the sea as these men followed it, Kane was unaware; or that only a desperate need for men saved him further man-handling in payment for his mutinous behaviour. As it was, with his powerful frame, he represented too valuable a body in a more than usually useless crew, thus bringing upon himself consideration.

Said the mate: "Well, what's the matter here?" In his voice too was that peculiar sibilating, an indescribable slurring and dwelling on words and clipping of others characteristic of the Highlander speaking English.

"I don't know," Kane replied, deeply worried. "I think maybe it's brain fever. He's not very strong anyway, and wasn't able to stand the beating those shore lice gave him."

"Well, you can't help him much, and you're needed on deck." There was a trace of returning truculence in the mate's last words. Then he added, more conciliatingly: "I'll have the captain take a look at him after while; he's something of a doctor."

Kane rose. Obedience to orders, he realised, was the best course for the present. Indeed, now no plan, or even the vaguest idea of how he and

Jimmy could escape came to him. So he went on deck and as part of the sorry crew took his first lesson in breaking out and setting canvas on the whaler *Ena*.

And as he worked under the drive of these bullying, cursing mates, there began to dawn upon the millionaire new concepts of life. All these years of ease, of power by wealth created, had unconsciously narrowed his viewpoint. He had travelled; had seen many lands; had sought and found excitement. Yet all the experiences, the things seen, had been in a certain ordered groove, which the possession of wealth had made, a groove unnoticed, in all certainty, but nevertheless undeniably existent, the moving along in which had removed him from the harsher facts of life. He had never given life serious thought. He had always known there were rich and poor, strong and weak; but the actual clash of varied forces which made up the every day world had always been far removed from him. Now, however, perched perilously aloft, bending clumsy fingers to work foreign and harsh, at the hoarse-voiced bidding of a whale ship's officer, the contact with elemental things kept his naturally keen brain dwelling on new thoughts brought to life by new environment.

Watching the actions of his fellow workers—spineless creatures who cringed and crawled and

knew not the real fullness of life—Kane was oppressed with a realisation of Nature's terrible unfairness. These men of the crew were weak, were lacking in brain or muscular fibre; while on the other hand, the mates, brutal, ignorant, were still forceful, resourceful, invested with the power to drive and command. And this little man-group on this battered old whaler, was but a miniature of the great life struggle of similar breeds of men—the weak and the strong—going on all the time all the world over, coeval with time and the motion of the stars.

And again Kane asked himself were the weak to blame for their weakness, or the strong to be credited with their strength? This new questioning began oddly to trouble him. Never before had he dwelt upon such a problem. His well-ordered world had not been conducive to this or any other worth while form of cogitation, so Kane was at a loss—he had no philosophy. And now for the first time in his life he realised the need of one.

Certainly, he reasoned Nature was unfair; but now he saw how the strong, instead of being kind to the weak and helpful, trampled upon them here upon this whaleship, drove them so that they, the strong, might benefit.

In the wake of this thought as Kane came to the deck when the last inch of the *Ena's* canvas had been spread, he thought again of Jimmy, and

a great gladness came that he was strong so that he could protect at least one of the weak ones, his so frail friend tossing and muttering in high fever in an unclean bunk in quarters where the air was malodorous and mephitic. And this fathered another thought, which brought a grim smile to his lips: "When I get back to Frisco, I'll have a real home built for poor devils like these," he thought, staring out to the open sea, a bleak vista of grey tossing water roughened with white caps. Struck with the memory of the night before, he added: "And I'll build it right close to that Mission, and put that old fat boy out of business."

It was characteristic of the man that he took his ultimate return to San Francisco as a matter of certainty, giving no thought to the large possibility of never returning which faces every man on board a whaler in arctic seas.

And all in a moment, Kane's just-come deeper interest in the men around him and the problems in life they represented caused him to view the voyage ahead with new eyes: no longer was he desirous of escape. A short time ago, at the spur of the whim of the moment, he had fed half a hundred of earthly scum similar to the crew he now was a part of; then, only a few minutes following the banqueting, had dared and fought them, still seeing them only as inferior, beast like beings in the form of men. His action of feeding

them had been merely a mode of personal entertainment, not an act charitably intentioned; the later seeing them had only heightened a disgust which had caused him to utter words and bring about a fight with the resultant happenings which brought him now aboard an ill-kept whaler. Now, however, even though companion of such weak specimens for so short a while, there came to Kane's heart a feeling of tolerance, the opening wedge for a larger, kindlier view of his fellow men. If these men of the crew and their same kind on shore were victims of an unfair Nature, then why should not he try and help them; if, on the other hand they were brought to the present pass by their own actions, then it was up to him and the other men of the master breed to help rather than hinder their reaching a decent plane of life.

Kane was too new a member to the ranks of economic thinking to realise how vast was the problem before him. One moment now he was inclined to accept Jimmy's fatalism, the next to deny it. Yet vague plans of action as to what he should do when once the sidewalks of San Francisco were beneath his feet came to his mind. He was yet so amateur a philosopher as never once even to gain sight of the fact that, if he accepted Jimmy's fatalism, then the lives of these men and his own and all the others of the world's humanity were beyond his power of changing.

CHAPTER FIVE

Into the Land of Leviathans

THE whaler *Ena*, being a topsail schooner, required infinitely less man power than a barque-rigged vessel of her own or even considerably more than three hundred ton displacement. So her crew, in matter of numbers, was sufficient to have worked her without undue stress and toil.

Yet times without number—even when rough weather did not require the shortening of sail, or the following fine spell demand setting of all possible canvas—both watches had to be called in order that the simplest work might be done.

At first this was excusable by reason of every single piece of line, sheet and tackle aboard a ship being utterly foreign to these men's hands and brains. Yet, with the passing of weeks, they became no better, though that were sufficient time to make an average man at least moderately proficient at the duties so small a ship demanded. Even the task of taking a turn at the wheel seemed beyond the majority of this crew's ken. And Maclean and the mates cursed and bullied and gave iron-handed examples of

the way things should be done, without making any appreciable headway.

Truly, as he again and again voiced to his mates and boatsteerers, Maclean had never sailed with such a helpless lot.

Kane found himself on the port watch, for shrewd Sandy Maclean, having won first chance in the picking, had made the millionaire his initial choice. In addition on the port watch was Bill Harvey, a wizened little man, prematurely old. He had been a railroad brakeman, but his nerve broken in a wreck, the work later helped on by hard times of unemployment and much drinking of bad whiskey, he was now almost useless, crying weakly every time he was driven aloft, and, once there, doing little more than hold on. Fred Walsh, thin, osseous, shaky, for all he claimed but twenty-five years, was the second weakling on the watch. He had a thin, pale, much freckled face, and that skin of peculiar dead white tinge so often noticeable in people possessed of brightly red hair. Cocaine and heroin had long had him in their grip, and now, robbed of both, he was in pitiable condition. The two others who made up the watch were slightly an improvement. One, Sam Jones, had spent the best part of his days, since boyhood twenty years before, as a railroad trackman. He had risen to the position of section foreman on the Southern Pacific railroad.

Coming off his section for a two weeks' holiday in San Francisco, he had gravitated to the Barbary Coast in search of amusement, and the denizens of the Barbary Coast, past masters in handling such easy prey, had drugged him, robbed him, and then, not satisfied, had sold him aboard the *Ena*. He was strong, willing, and possessed of an average mentality. The fifth man, Morley Starns, a farm hand of weak mind, had spent the major portion of his life on various ranches in the San Joaquin Valley. He was a willing worker, but stupid and slow, and given to uncontrollable fits of hysterical laughter, during which he was utterly useless. They came upon him at the strangest times—while he was aloft, as he ate, or sometimes woke him from sleep. He was short and stout, with round, red face, a tousled mop of over-long hair of an indefinite straw colour, and little eyes, these made to appear the smaller by reason of the fat rolls of his cheeks pressing up against his lower lids. But he was without fear, working well at times.

Upon the shoulders of Kane, Jones and Starns fell the burden of the work. Jimmy Shaler made the sixth man of the watch, but it was many days after sailing from San Francisco before he went aloft.

On the other watch the six men were, if anything worse. Barbary Coast scum picked up at

the last minute they were, with two exceptions. The four belonged to a type known in the region of the Coast as "wine-bums," a type of fiend peculiar to places where cheap wine is to be had. The numbing and brain atrophying affect of this sour, new native wine as sold in "barrel-houses" is appalling in its effect. It was weeks before the four were at all near to normal. They answered to the names of Small, Cooper, Windle, Sparks, and claimed to be respectively a baker, a linotype operator, a bricklayer and a painter. They were all of average height, the nondescript kind of men that fill big cities, somehow strangely alike.

The remaining two, Stokes and Keene, were somewhat of an improvement. Stokes was an ex-Imperial army man, a cockney, with the English traits of doggedness, perseverance and a certainty of his country's superiority over all the lands of earth, much in evidence. He was well past fifty. Keene was a tall, slim, boyish-faced man of thirty. He had been a drug clerk; but, falling victim to the most deadly of those he handled—morphine—had, like Walsh, come down to the fo'castle of a whaling ship. These last two men, and Cooper, the linotype operator, shouldered the major portion of the work on the star-board watch, just as Kane, Jones and Starns did on the port.

Of the whole crew, only Kane, Jones, Keene and Stokes proved satisfactory at the wheel.

Yet poor as was the *Ena's* crew, the boat still drove ever northward, logging steadily an average of ninety knots every twelve hours.

Rapidly the weather grew colder, and every man made large demands upon the slo-chest. Still, despite piling on every possible garment that was compatible with moving about, the men were utterly miserable, for they were illy nourished, their blood cold from very thinness.

The *Ena*, long sprung in many spots, leaked the more as the voyage continued, thus calling the men continually to the pumps. The fo'castle defied their most strenuous efforts, and remained never less than an inch deep in water, causing a dampness that brought upon the men terrible rheumatic pains.

The ship's stores were a ghastly travesty on the name of food. Barrelled beef and pork, the latter "sow-belly" so antiquated as to be of a golden hue, winning from the somewhat witty Keene the title of "brassy-bosom," made up the meat ration. The sea biscuit was very old and consequently very much alive. These provisions, molasses and coffee of the cheapest grade, dried apples and preserved potatoes made up the major portion of a diet monotonous and utterly insufficient for men like these who had been badly nour-

ished for weeks before they came aboard, and were now performing unaccustomed and to them backbreaking labour.

There were no antiscorbutics served of any kind. As a matter of fact there were none on board. On a ship, arctic bound as the *Ena* was, this was little short of criminal.

Twenty days out from San Francisco the *Ena* encountered her first terrific storm and for sixteen hours both watches were continually on deck, aloft, or at the pumps. So terrific was the wind that, though running before it, it was a case of snugging down every inch of canvas. The grey green seas poured aboard in long and roaring succession, sweeping man after man on his way aloft, from his feet and into the spouting scrupers, from which they crawled half a minute later, choking, half drowned, utterly soaking and bruised from head to foot, yet still forced on to labour before the fear of captain and mates, doubly brutal in this hour of danger.

Following the storm an epidemic of sea boils broke out as fresh affliction to the hapless crew. Added to this many had received bad cuts from their clumsy handling of ropes. Touching these the salt water and the cold created running sores. Many of the sea boils ate to the very bone of the men's arms, wrists and legs, so the slightest

striking against any object rung screams of agony from the sufferers.

Only Kane of all the *Ena's* crew enjoyed good health, largely due to his body being well nourished when the voyage began, and, in lesser part, to his high spirits, a thorough equanimity of mind, for these new scenes and the resultant ponderings caused in his mind no mood of continual blackness, no Schopenhauerian pessimism. Kane was interested; had already been moved with determination to help, but it was not his nature to be sad. And he had begun actually to enjoy this strange trip. To him the storm was a glorious sensation; he exulted in every minute of it. There was something blood-stirring, something that set his whole body aglow and athrill, in this action of standing on the reeling deck, watching the tossing infinity of striving waters stretching away and away to the eternal horizon. As the little schooner sent her sheathed, blunt nose into those running mountains of water and split their crests and slid down into the long trough below, for the moment almost vertical, every part of Kane reacted in a fierce, high ecstasy. His spirits were transcended; some of the fury, the untrammelled might of the battling elements seemed transfused to him, exalting him to god-like heights.

There was something unnatural, something

atavic in this lusty love of his for the raging sea, a something not inherent from those land-conquering near forefathers of his. And during the first storm and the three subsequent ones met with before the whaling grounds were reached he clung to the deck for hours at a time, happy in every minute. On two occasions he did double duty at the wheel, for his proficiency and superiority over all the crew was quickly taken advantage of. Even in the worst storm he, while at the wheel, had never let the *Ena* more than two points off her course, where two men had been required when it came time to relieve him, and then always the mate must needs be in attendance, ordering sharply now and then: "Meet her; meet her," as some extra large roller dashed down upon them.

As the *Ena* slipped steadily onward toward her northern goal, Jimmy Shaler came slowly back to the world of conscious things. For ten days he had tossed in delirium, taking no food, but gulping down eagerly the pannikins of water offered him. Devil Maclean had perfunctorily treated him, but it was to Keene, the ex-drug clerk, that Jimmy owed his recovery. Possessed of considerable knowledge of medicine, Keene, after the second day out, took the care of the newspaperman entirely upon himself. Every ship carries a medicine chest, more or less complete; and

though Devil Maclean had brought no antiscorbutics aboard, his supply of drugs was fairly complete. From this medicine chest he met readily all of Keene's requisitions.

In this the captain acted from no stirrings of sympathy. It was merely a matter of business. If Jimmy was not to die, it was the best thing to get him well as quickly as possible, so he might turn to and work.

So the *Ena* moved on with her leaking hull and her driven, dog-like crew. Past the Pribilofs; past Cape Newenham, and Kuskokwim Bay; past Cape Romanzof, and on through Norton Sound the vessel went and into the Arctic Sea. Point Barrow was sighted, left behind, and the ninety miles of the Mackenzie River's delta-dotted mouth. Then at last, near the ending of July the *Ena* came to anchor off Trail Point, some distance past Baillie Island beyond the eastern end of Beaufort Sea.

The safe running in and out of these northern waters is a matter of luck combined with long experience, knowledge and judgment of the varying currents and the ice drift. The three latter qualities were Devil Maclean's and luck had been mostly with him on his northern expeditions for many years. Nearly all American whalers that sailed into arctic seas were provided with provisions for at least two years, sometimes three;

and owing to the difficulties of navigation and the growing scarcity of whales two seasons were frequently spent on the whaling grounds.

Devil Maclean, following a custom of recent years, and through some eight seasons in Beaufort Sea and the vicinity, had established working relations with the members of a Kogmolluck Esquimaux Village on Trail Point. The Esquimaux' profits from the compact was not large, still to these simple people it was satisfactory, particularly as Maclean for the past two seasons had left on each occasion two whaleboats with the tribe. These thirty foot, centre-board cedar boats were a valuable possession to the village, and in return the whaler received two-thirds of any bone taken in his absence.

The arrangement was equally satisfactory from the whaler's point of view, allowing him each season to bring in a couple more boats, thus adding to a standing fleet in these waters in his possession, but which he could rest easy would be well taken care of by the Esquimaux.

With the four boats the *Ena* now carried, a fleet of eight existed when she dropped her anchor off Trail Point.

Compared to arctic whaling in the year 1910, betting on horse races, playing the stock market, or such games of chance as faro, roulette or poker is sure-thing gambling. Whaling here was a

master gamble, a game in which shipmasters bet their vessels, their own lives and the lives of their crews against the possibilities of even taking one of these gigantic leviathans. The season lasted usually from the middle of May to the twenty-fifth of August, during which time the whaling vessel cruised in likely waters, most often well within the three mile limit, as in these inshore waters whales were most often to be found.

The previous season the whaling schooner *Karluk*, Captain Cottle commanding, had taken twenty whales, bringing a total of \$130,000 on the outside market. Till then Devil Maclean's record of seventeen had been unbeaten. And such are the strange ways of the pride of men, that the *Karluk's* success and the establishing by Captain Cottle of a higher record rankled deep in Devil Maclean's heart. It was no mere matter of money. The thing lay deeper. Till then, Maclean's record had been the greatest. Now his proud escutcheon was marred by the shadow of a superior catch. So there remained only one recourse: he must beat the *Karluk's* record. It was this desire that filled his heart. With eight boats now his in these waters, the chances for success were heightened, so that it was with high heart he stared from the deck of the *Ena* on the evening of July twenty-eighth toward the shores of Trail Point; though storms, contrary winds

and treacherous and unexpectedly shifting ice floe had made his arrival late, the possession of eight boats still made possible a record catch.

Trail Point loomed strangely green with the glory of the short blooming summer.

Contrary, however, to his expectations no sign of the village was to be seen. Maclean had expected the Kogmollucks to be on hand, he having impressed particularly upon Ou Joug, the most intelligent of the tribe, to await here his arrival.

However, knowing the habits of these people, Maclean realised their hunting might have taken them a little farther up the coast, or inland, from which district, if the hunting should have proved good, their return might be delayed. And with the memory of the *Karluk's* greater record always rankling he resented the delay.

CHAPTER SIX

In Which Kane Meets a Strange One of the Master Breed

FOR two days the *Ena* lay off Trail Point. Then, growing impatient, Devil Maclean outfitted the Number One whaleboat for a week's cruise along the coast. His brother Sandy, the first mate, Kane, Keene, Stokes and Jones made up the boat's crew. Like most whaleboats the *Ena's* were propelled by five oars, two to a side, and a long steering sweep, as well as being equipped with mast and sail. When the latter was in use, a moveable rudder took the place of the steering sweep. In view of the remarkably acute hearing of the whale, the usual metal rowlocks were replaced by stout pins to which the oars were attached by loops of rope, or "grum-mets."

The wind being favourable the sail was raised and the whaleboat slipped around Trail Point and eastward along the coast. Night and day were almost one now as far as the division of light was concerned. They travelled steadily all day, not putting in to shore until after eight

o'clock. Here they made hasty and rough night camp. They were afloat again by six the next morning.

All around was the grey green of this eternally cold sea stretching away east and west and to the northward, circling the pole, a sinister waste of water, grave of endless ships and men. To the south rose a sloping shoreline ascending gradually as it stretched back to the barren tundra. It was gay with the verdure of fleeting arctic summer; but despite its vernalism there was something harsh, cruel and forbidding about this lonely far-reaching land, something indefinably depressing, and yet possessed of spirit-gripping power a something dangerous that takes and holds forever in its spell men who tarry too long within the arctics.

But of all this crew only Devil Maclean and his brother had felt the northland's subtle calling; they were too lacking in self-analysis to comprehend the land's effect upon their own psychology.

Now as the boat moved ahead under a brisk offshore wind, some of this land's mysterious magnetism took hold of Kane. There was fascination in the very hush and silence of this waste; a vast, profound calm calling to a spiritual something within him. A queer desire seized Kane that he might roam these wide, free stretches utterly alone, and here in the wilder-

ness, solitary, contemplate upon the realities of life so recently brought to his attention.

Kane, now, from rubbing shoulders with the misfits and unfortunates of earth, and the long hours of wide prospects of sea and sky, wanted to settle with himself a definite course of future action.

Out of a deep reverie, his eyes staring unseen across the sea and land, he was sharply brought by a simultaneous exclamation from his companions. Following their words and glance he saw at anchor ahead in a little sheltered bay a three-masted, barque-rigged schooner, of about four hundred tons register, trim of line, and fairly spick and span despite her grimy business. Her fore and main masts were fitted at the top with large barrel observation stations, these "crows-nests" proclaiming undoubtedly her whaler calling, even had there not now lain at her portside a medium-sized one of these mammals of the deep, made fast by the head and tail.

Devil Maclean's eyes rested scarce a moment on the ship, but roved on to the fleet of boats gathered around her.

"Ower boats, Santy, ower boats; she's got effery dom one o' them!" There was something almost frightening in his tone, mixture as it was of boundless fury, protest and resentment.

They had now come within fifty yards of the

ship. Under Devil Maclean's sharp command the sail was now dropped, and the boat hauled to. Tossing gently on the lazily ruffled sea the crew examined the vessel critically.

Below her bowsprit was the strangest figure-head even the sea veteran Maclean had ever seen. It was the exquisitely carved figure of a man in armour of ancient design. A round shield and a great sword were in his hands, and on his long-haired head a winged helmet such as worn by Vikings of old was set. The bow carried in scroll writing of odd design the name *Varangian*.

The carved figure and the vessel's name set Kane to thinking, for somehow the word seemed familiar. Yet in that peculiar way things known but long unthought of or forgotten will hover on the tip of the tongue though still refusing to come, Kane's mind struggled for elucidation for several moments before he finally mastered the remembrance.

Varangians! Why, he had once written a paper on them as part of his education when attending Stamford University a decade ago!

Ancient Norse vikings they were, land fighters and rovers of the sea in the ninth century.

With the recalling of the name's meaning, Kane eyed the ship with new and deeper interest. Surely with such a name and gallant figure on her prow the boat must have a worth-while

skipper; perhaps some son, straight-descendant of famous, saga-sung ancestor walked its deck, in his blood the same deathless strain sponsored by thrall-commanding forefathers.

Different indeed from these romantic speculations were the thoughts of Devil Maclean and his equally wrothy brother.

"Dirty Scou'wegians!" Sandy voiced after several moments' contemplation. Like Kane he had arrived at the same conclusion, though by different thought processes.

"They're graun hands at makin' love to the 'Huskies,'" the captain replied, speaking of the Esquimaux by a name almost entirely used to designate them by white men in the arctic regions.

"We'll give them a hail, an' talk it over," Devil Maclean went on, "though I'm thinkin' they'll no be reasonable."

Following his order the men fitted the oars in the grummets and pulled nearer to the ship, stopping when close alongside.

As yet no sight of any human form had the boat's crew caught. Evidently all hands were below eating.

In answer to Devil Maclean's hail there quickly appeared at the rail the huge figure of a blonde, bare-headed giant of a man, blue-eyed, slow of movement; just such a being as might have stepped the deck of pirate *snekkjur* ten centuries

before. Negligently he leaned his arm upon the rail, and bending over listened in silence while Devil Maclean introduced himself and made explanations regarding his ownership of the boats and the request to instruct the Esquimaux to return with them.

Even after the captain had finished speaking his listener remained staring down upon them, a silent figure, grave, immutable of face, in his strange blue eyes a far away contemplative look. Finally he disappeared without a word, without a gesture.

"Well, damn him, anyway!" Sandy burst out, "not even an answer."

But the captain, wiser in the ways of men, growled: "He's gone to talk with someone." So with lifted oars they waited.

Presently the man returned, and behind him the boat's crew caught sight of another equally tall, but less bulky of frame. Even though this second person could be but vaguely glimpsed, Kane, at least was oddly impressed by a sense of bizarreness by the last comer. Unlike the first, his head was covered by a fur cap, noticeably of much more than usual height which added to his tallness. Apparently from his actions, though master here, he preferred to remain in the background, for after coming near enough to gain

brief survey, he stepped back out of sight to those below.

Yet in that instant Kane caught sight of a face wonderfully fine, the brow high, broad and white, but at the distance the features indistinct.

Again as before, leaning on the rail the blonde giant viewed them in long and silent contemplation. There was no ripple of expression on his broad, still face; only unruffled calm, an almost benign indifference. It was the calm of a ponderously slow mind formulating words. He stood so long silent there, gazing unwaveringly down upon them that the crew shuffled uneasily. Perhaps two minutes passed before he spoke, then he said, in the slow and hesitating manner of one launching into a foreign language understood, but little used: "How mooch you tak for yower four boats?"

This reply was so unexpected that for a moment Devil Maclean was nonplussed. Then the canker of defeat born of the *Karluks*' greater record, and his own stubborn resolve to win back his whaling fame, caused him to make sharp, curt reply: "They're not for sale. I need them for myself."

The giant above received this unruffled. He nodded ponderously, the movement of the head magnificently slow. "Well, now, that iss too badt." The words were uttered so simply in the

man's measured and modulated tones as to rob them of offence. "You see," he went on explanatorily, "coomin' in we meet beeg storm, an' we loos' all boats farward. Then we find the Huskies and your boats an' we go ahead. Now we like to buy." Every word, all his manner urged conciliation. "We pay goodt." Then, as if on an after thought, and most convincing of all: "An' you already got some."

It was a fair and reasonable proposition, particularly in this arctic land where the law of brotherhood is more strongly effective than in less harsh environment. With anyone but Devil Maclean it would have received consideration. Even he, in other times, might have accepted readily. But now desires primitive, almost childish, yet powerfully swaying were against such acceptance. To him this was no mere voyage of gain. The queer man-pride of him had been hurt. Quaint archetype, friendless rover of the seas, brutal, harsh driver of men, it was a part of the warp and the woof of him to want always to stand as master of his calling—he was Devil Maclean, with whom was no equal as an arctic whaler! None should take a greater catch than he! To lay just claim to the greatest catch was life to him; to know men would discuss his prowess and pay him rough homage, though far away and never heard by him was a thing worth

while, much to be desired. He had made a reputation as a whaler, a thing long striven for, long held. And now that pre-eminence had been lost, there could never be peace in his heart till it was regained.

Maclean was strongest of the strong. His desires bit the deeper for this very reason; their satisfying was fought far more bitterly for than those of men of common mould. So he repeated, and this time his voice rasped unpleasantly: "My boats are not for sale; I want them now."

The big man moved his head, the slightest inclination, the motion one of vague regret. "But we moost haff boats." There was a touch of entreaty, a dignified and justified pleading in his softly ventured words, yet all uttered with no loss of pride.

Hot tempers are the more quickly provoked by placid meeting and soft insistence. Now Maclean's Highland Scotch anger rose to white heat. Good judgment carried away, he roared, "Damme, duyee refuse me ma owan praiperty!"

Still hopeful in face of even such reply, and all unruffled, the big Norwegian repeated his offer in more definite terms: "Coom, Meestur Maclean, we give you two thousandt doolars for your boats."

The offer was enormous even considering these far seas.

But there was nothing could change Maclean. With eight boats fully manned he stood good chance to achieve his purpose of exceeding the *Karluk's* record. With but four, the chance still was his, but greatly lessened. And all advantage possible he was determined on having. And he said: "No I want my boats."

The Norwegian still leaned over the rail, cool, negligent, without sign of anger or perturbation. After a second he said: "We can't give you them boats, we need them too badt."

Made furious beyond control, Devil Maclean sprang to his feet. Shaking his fist, and in his rage lapsing into his native tongue, he cursed the man, the whole Varangian crew in purest Gaelic, adding direst threats which only he and his stalwart brother understood. Then, after a moment, recovering, he concluded in English: "Then, damme, I'll come and take them, and just for good measure I'll walk every yalla-haired Scou'-wegian of ye into the Arctic ocean, and make your schooner another job for the white whale!"*

For answer the man at the rail turned away, disappeared, still unhurried, without evidence of excitement. Instantly, however, there came sounds of motion. From out of sight on board a voice, clear, bell-like, almost feminine in the

* White whale—a whaler and sailor expression similar to "Davy Jones' Locker."

fineness of its toning, began issuing orders in an unknown tongue.

Evidently Devil Maclean's announcement had been taken for a pronouncement of immediate attack, for in less than a minute's time a dozen forms loomed up along the rail, in the hands of each a rifle. And among them, to Devil Maclean's fury, were several Esquimaux.

But Devil Maclean was too shrewd a mariner to attempt the attacking from a small boat a vessel with an armed, expectant, and greatly outnumbering crew. Gruffly he ordered a retreat. Turning the boat about the men raised sail and started tacking back toward the *Ena*.

Between captain and crew no word was spoken; of his future intentions Maclean said nothing.

For two days following the return to the *Ena*, the vessel lay at anchor. During this time the men's only work consisted in loading into a couple of the whaleboats a dozen blubber spears, long-handled implements with steel blades some six inches wide and of an almost razor sharpness. Now that the ship was in whaling territory the boats hung always ready from the davits.

With the passing of July the days were rapidly growing shorter, and for two hours after midnight a semi-dark existed.

On the third morning after the visit to the

Varangian, the captain became once more active. The anchor was ordered catted, sails were bent and the *Ena* again began plowing heavy way through a cold and slaty sea.

Under Maclean's direction the *Ena* hugged the land, following nearly the same route as taken earlier by the whaleboat. By eight o'clock in the evening the vessel reached a point within a few miles of where the *Varangian* had last been visited.

The *Ena* was hove to, her anchor dropped. This finished, all the crew were assembled amidship and Maclean addressed them.

"Men, them dirty Scou'wegians have stolen ower boats. They're robbin' us of thousands of dollars; thousands of dollars, a share of which goes to every man jack o' this crew. You've got a chance, men, to make a snug little pile on this voyage, maybe two thousand, maybe more apiece if ye have enough boats. But you can't make it with the boats we've got. Ye've got to get them boats back from them dirty Scou'wegians." He stopped abruptly, watching the effect of this artfully made appeal, which held out possibilities of such rich prize.

For the moment he had effaced his own interest, his very personality; it was as if the ship and all it contained was destined solely for the interests of the crew. Yet in spite of his cunning call to

the men's cupidity, they made no answer. Bad conditions, hard-living in the past, now made suspicious their at best but little souls; they now viewed with sceptic eyes this astonishing change of front, knowing as they did it portended nothing more than that they were to serve some new and unusual need of the captain.

"Now, men," the captain proceeded, and his voice was sharper, bearing a little of the old crispness of command, "it will be mighty easy for us to get those boats back again, an' by way o' good measure some o' theirs. I don't think their boat will have changed position since we left her, so after one o'clock to-night, in two of the whale boats we'll creep up on her under cover of the half dark. It should be easy. After no sign of us since that day, they'll have quit taking seriously what I said. An' layin' sheltered like their boat is, it's mor'n likely they're no keepin' any watch. Part of the boats'll be about her, for she's got more than her davits can hold. For them in the davits some of us can slip aboard and cut them loose, or maybe lower them away. If we work quick, we oughta grab the boats and be startin' back before they're awake, an' if they do come after us an' make a fight"—Maclean paused to nod significantly toward a boat nearby, over the gunwale of which protruded the long handles of

the blubber knives—"if they do come after us, well, yere none o' ye cripples."

Still in silence, without any enthusiasm, yet without any sign of intending refusal to comply, the men heard the captain out. They did not want to fight, or even run the chance. Yet each and all, with the exception of Kane, were too craven to voice the thought; so great was their fear of the captain and the mates they stood ready to undertake such mission rather than disobey command. As for Kane: he had come so to enjoy the trip as to be actually glad he had been shanghaied; even the bad food, and the worse sleeping quarters were made compatible by the novelty of the adventure. And this latest incident appealed immensely to him, leading figure that he had been in so many fights of old.

Shortly after eleven that evening the men were mustered for the choosing of the crews. In addition now were the two "boatsteerers"—misnamed aristocrats of whaling ships who toil not at the working of the vessel, but dwell in indolence until such time comes when their deftness with the harpoon shall be called into play.

Like the Macleans, both of whom were skilful harpooners, the boatsteerers were husky Nova Scotians of Scotch descent, tuned all their lives to the ways of the sea. These men, the Macleans, the second mate and the crew made a fighting

force of sixteen, not counting the cook. To man the ship, however, was left under the command of the second mate, Jimmy Shaler, the cook, and Keene the druggist. With such men the *Ena* could be handled, even should come unexpected weather.

At the last moment, with the allotment made, Devil Maclean noticed it left the outgoing crew to number thirteen. True sailorman that he was, he promptly ordered Bill Harvey, the whining, broken little brakeman, to remain aboard, much to that worthy's unspeakable pleasure.

In the number one whaleboat, under Devil Maclean's command, went one of the boatsteerers, Kane, Fred Walsh, and Cooper, the ex-linotype operator, with last, Morley Starns, the weak-minded farm hand given to such uncontrollable fits of wild, high laughter, which came upon him at the most unexpected times.

Sandy Maclean, Windle, Sparks, Stokes and the other boatsteerer made up the second crew. The Macleans and the boatsteerers were armed with rifles and revolvers; for the men blubber knives were carried, though it was the captain's intention and greatest hope that the whole raid, what of its daring, would be unexpected, and so carried out without any close combat.

Nearly always it is the most daringly conceived

projects which succeed, by very reason of their nature; and certainly Maclean's was a master one.

With oars swinging in sound-muffling grum-mets the two boats left the ship's side, and stole on in the direction where last the Norwegian ship had been.

It was dusk when they sighted the jutting point beyond which the harbour lay. Here the land rose sharply to a height sufficient to make it impossible to see from the boats whether or not the whaler still was at anchor. It was still not so high that a man on the *Varangian's* deck or in one of the still higher "crowsnests" could not see the boats should he happen to be looking. So lying close in to shore Maclean called a halt until the dusk should deepen to the semi-dark.

When night fell the boats moved soundlessly forward, slipped around the point and came into view of the *Varangian*, bulking an amorphous shape, vague and but half defined in the night.

No sound came from the ship; not even a riding light showed. Evidently deeming nautical precautions unnecessary in such lone sea, the thrifty Norwegians had dispensed with such as a matter of economy.

It was so still that the very ripples from the bows of the whaleboats seemed loud. The rowers did not lift the oar blades from the water, but drew them backward through it on a slant after

each forward sending stroke, preventing even the slightest noise of splash. As a further assurance of silence the blades were wrapped in sacks, an extra precaution against untoward sound.

Unchallenged the two boats crept up and to the whaleship's portside. From her davits here two boats hung. On the water two more rode lightly aft, their holding lines extending over the rail to the poop. Closer in and trailing by a shorter rope was a dinghy. No whale now lay at the vessel's side as on the former occasion. Evidently someone had been using the dinghy a few hours before, perhaps for a trip to the shore a quarter of a mile away, for a ladder still hung over the side, a thing which proved of most fortunate assistance to the attackers.

Under Maclean's swiftly spoken commands the number one whaleboat crept up alongside the ladder. Kane, Morley Starns, Cooper and the boatsteerer he ordered aboard to let down the two whaleboats hanging here and that one he believed must be hanging on the starboard, for the Norwegians had admitted to the loss of all but one boat of their own. The four men moved up the ship's side and to their places, Kane and Cooper to the boat farthest aft, Starns and the boatsteerer the other. As they ascended, the crew of the number two whaleboat cut free the boats floating astern. Into one of these Stokes and the boat-

steerer climbed, the best oarsmen of the crew, and, fastening the second boat astern began slowly rowing seaward, the remainder of the crew then drawing around to starboard, where, seeing, as expected, one boat hanging from the davits, they waited below it with grappling hook and line ready for it when it should reach the water from the hands of their companions.

Kane and Cooper, having examined the port boat farthest aft and finding the blocks well-oiled, had just decided to lower the boat in the usual way, rather than cutting the fall-ropes as first intended for greater speed, when the death-still night was shattered by a peal of laughter, high-pitched, eldritch and wild, the sound more startling by very reason of its nature. It filled all the air, this untimely mirth; and quick in the wake of the first mad peal came others, louder, shriller, more fantastic than the first.

It froze Kane and Cooper in their tracks. A long moment they stood, held motionless by surprise. Then understanding came to Kane. "Damn it," he said in sincere regret with the now coming certainty of the frustration of the plan, "we should have known better than bring that fool Starns along."

And Starns the unfortunate, half-wit it was. Just in the act of letting go the forward boat at the command of the boatsteerer, his strange dis-

ease had seized upon him. All unaware and uncaring of danger he plumped down upon the deck and sat and laughed and laughed and laughed. Paroxysm followed paroxysm, rousing all the placid night, creating earsplitting din, weird and uncanny in this dreary arctic setting where silence had forever reigned.

Instantly the ship, so still before, became alive with sound, the murmurous hum of arousing people. Out of the fo'castle hatch poured a stream of Esquimaux, clutching in their hands spears and rifles. The first, on catching sight of the strange figure near him on the deck would gladly have backed to his quarters but was restrained from the press behind, now swelled by women and children. And still Starns, seated on the deck, rocked on his buttocks and gave forth maniacal laughter.

Standing by the davits, Kane, such was his love of accomplishing anything attempted, would have still made quick attempt to lower away the boat, had not Cooper turned and bounded for the ladder. In the next second, Kane saw the form of the boatsteerer rise to the rail, poise a second and then go diving toward the water below. Then the millionaire thought of Starns. Yielding to the impulse to help the half-wit escape he ran forward and had covered three-quarters of the distance when he realized the hopelessness of the

attempt. In the wake of this came thought that Starns could not be worse off than aboard the *Ena*; the present boat might prove even better quarters. This, however, did not affect his own desire now to escape. He turned and ran back, making for the ladder hanging over the rail well astern. But when just about to pass the after cabin door, his foot came down flat upon a piece of greasy blubber, a tiny chunk evidently dropped to the deck during recent operations. His leg went sliding and he dropped heavily, alighting on his spine, jarring every fibre of his body.

A full minute he remained thus awkwardly seated, made half sick by his fall; then, just gaining to his feet, was forced to close with a rushing form emerging from out the cabin door. So sudden was the attack that the other's arms wrapped completely about him, pinning his own tightly against his body before he could make a move to prevent such advantage. At that, his adversary was no less surprised; half-dressed, stumbling pell mell upon the deck, this sudden rising up of Kane's large bulk directly in the onward path had brought forth instinctive rather than predetermined action.

But the grip, once taken, now was held with grim determination. They swayed back and forth, Kane vainly struggling to be free from a foe as tall and strong as he. They bent and reeled

and twisted on an almost unmoving deck, Kane's chin close upon the other's shoulder, their heads rubbing together as they strained strength to strength in primitive though yet bloodless combat.

Perhaps the length of half a minute the odd wrestling match had continued when Kane thrilled to a wild absurd thought, born of a peculiar odour drifting to his nostrils. But the grip, the strength and the height of his opponent, almost equal to his own, made such suspicion too fantastic.

The daze caused from his falling upon his spine which still affected him in the first few seconds of the fight, now left him. His brain cleared, cunning returned. Suddenly lifting one leg he brought it round and down in a vicious trip. Untrained and unprepared against such tactics, his opponent tottered backward and fell, yet still clung to him, and Kane, slightly overbalanced in making the trip, was carried as companion to the deck. Kane came down on top, and a little spasm of nausea filled him, so loud was the cracking sound with which the other's head met the planking.

Almost immediately the tightly holding hands relaxed. Kane drew himself free, rose to his knee, and was about to spring up and away toward the vessel's side in now probably too

belated flight, when his gaze was arrested by sight of the other's face and head.

"Good lord—a *woman*—I *was* right!"

And truly such a woman Kane had never seen before. In her fall, her hastily donned fur cap, had been dislodged. Now there tumbled down plait on plait of wondrous hair, yellow ropes thick as a baby's wrist, of a corn silk tinge and fineness, broke from loosely gathered coiffure, and lay upon the deck, over her high white forehead and delicate oval face, half hiding the thin, fine nose, and lips, now burning red from recent exertions.

From her face Kane's gaze passed swiftly and still almost disbelieving downward to the coarse blue sailor shirt, now open wide at the throat either from hasty dressing or the contact of the conflict, revealing below underwear of more delicate texture, covering bosom just relieved from boyishness by the rise of breasts firm, small, delicately rounding. She wore knee-length trousers of heavy mackinaw, the ends outside sea boots reaching to her knee.

Upon these latter features of her dress Kane dwelt but momentarily. For the moment the necessity of flight was forgotten. From the unconscious girl his eyes passed to the open cabin doorway. He gathered her in his arms, and not without difficulty rose to his feet. Crossing, he

entered the cabin. As he did so the night became loud with the rapid firing of many rifles.

With legs wide apart and shuffling step Kane brought his heavy burden into the cabin. In the shadowy gloom of the roomy interior he caught glimpse of a lounge, a bookcase, a table, wicker chairs and many other things oddly remindful of the main cabin on his own palatial yacht. But the night was already so filled with the surprise of what he now held in his arms that he did not realize fully how bizarre and how unusual were such furnishings upon a Norwegian whaler.

For a moment he stood just within the doorway, taking in the surroundings of this oblong-shaped room. Then, at the farther side, another room, the door of which was open, caught his eye. The room was lighted; from out its depths came a soft glow.

Passing to one side of the table and around various chairs, Kane reached and entered to see the white gleam of bedding, while the faint odours that are ever a part of a refined woman's boudoir came to his nostrils. The room was tiny, and a swinging bunk, remarkable of design, and a small dresser, ironed to the floor, filled nearly all the space. As Kane laid the girl down upon the bed, he noted with surprise an electric globe with green, curved shade and tiny sprocket chain.

Certainly, this was a most unusual whaler. The

electric light recalled to him that similar lighting facilities were possible on the *Ena* by reason of her auxiliary engine, had Maclean ever given a thought to the finer comforts.

He noted how clever was the bed, a combining of all the comforts of the land to meet the emergencies of the sea. At the end of four stout steel springs fastened to the cabin-roof hung a box spring, covered with thick mattress. The spring almost touched the wall at one side and those of both ends. But running from the spring to all these points were outward pointing buffer coils, light, but strong. Viewing the arrangement Kane felt sure that even the roughest seas would not make the occupant of this couch uncomfortable. His observations occupied but the space of thirty seconds, when he once more gave attention to his late opponent. She still lay unmoving on the tossed covers, breathing evenly. A little colour was coming back into her face; but no flutter of the eyelids gave sign of returning consciousness, and Kane realized there was really nothing he could do. Still, anxious to do something, he raised her head up, arranging it more comfortably, as he did so feeling the large swelling which had arisen at the back of her head where it had come in contact with the planking. The glorious tumbled braids of hair, thick as a baby's wrist, and yellow with the hue and fineness of the silk of ripening

corn, lay massed about her face and brow and stretched in wild abandon on the bed.

There was something fascinating about these marvellous strands of hair, so long the tip of one, more straight-falling than the rest, touched her belted waist line, and Kane, yielding to an uncontrollable impulse, picked this one up, fingering it with an ecstasy indefinable, as might some connoisseur of old point lace.

As he did so, all his attention fixed for the moment upon the lustrous strands, her eyelids fluttered, opened; two big blue eyes looked wonderingly, then froze to colder light, but in the following second gave way to a softer gaze with recollection of the recent past, and a half comprehension of the reason for the present sight. She snapped: "What the devil you doing?" And she sat up sharply as she spoke.

As if the fondled hair had suddenly been charged with electricity, Kane let it drop, sprang back a step, stood staring, his expression most fatuous.

"Why, you see, you hurt your head," he blurted.

"And I suppose your holding my hair was going to cure it," she voiced sarcastically.

Kane had many times been called the best looking man in San Francisco. Even now, with his hair overlong, he had shaved recently, so still

retained much of his charm of feature. There was something about his intelligent face, so invitingly open and boyish, and his huge frame, and poise that was unsailor-like.

Puzzledly she went on, though she winced with a spasm of pain as she spoke: "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

"I was one of Devil Maclean's crew, but since I've seen you I'm for this ship." The millionaire was himself again. Seized with a wanting to know more of this fascinating mystery of the sea, he determined to call into play all his glibness of tongue, his pleasant manner which in the past had gained him many a desired end.

But hardly had he finished speaking than she strove to rise to a sitting posture. "My God, my boats!" she cried. With one leg thrown over the edge of the bed she lay half risen after uttering this that was no woman's cry, but rather the savage toning of a sexless sea-being. In the next instant there drifted into the room the sound of staccato firing.

With teeth clenched she strove to gain the floor, but the blow had left her weak, still dizzy and with throbbing head that increased with her movement. Then she dropped back, closing her eyes.

Kane stood in silence watching. Quickly her eyes opened. "Tell me what happened." So

great was her interest in her own affairs that the strangeness of the man before her so instantly changing from enemy to ally did not occur to her.

With a few terse and dramatic sentences Kane described the happenings to the moment. Then, as another round of firing sounded, and she strove again to rise, only to fall back again, he said: "You stay quiet. I'll go and see what's doing."

He stepped out into the outer cabin and moved toward the deck. The east was red. Day was at hand. Looking seaward Kane saw four boats in close order. To better grasp the situation he ran to the rail. As he did so a huge seaman came running towards him, a rifle in his hand. Quite unthinking for a second of his anomalous position Kane did not realize his own danger.

Too late he turned to run back to the safety of the cabin. As he turned the man swung his gun above his head, his hands grasping the barrel. With the weapon wielded as a club he overtook this so strangely appeared enemy. As Kane reached the cabin doorway, his pursuer came within striking distance, and brought down upon his unarmed victim's head the rifle's heavy butt.

Senseless, and dropping as falls an axe-cut tree, the millionaire came loggishly to the deck.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Philosophy of a Female of the Master Breed

KANE returned to consciousness with a feeling somewhat similar to those of previous occasions when waking in the fo'castle of the *Ena*, and later on deck after the beating at the hands of Devil Maclean. This time his head was a little less sore; his body ached not at all.

"Perhaps I'm getting used to it," he thought.

All around him was brilliant sunshine. For a moment his dazzled eyes could not take in the surroundings. Then gradually they became accustomed to the light, and he realised he was in the big cabin of the *Varangian*, stretched upon a lounge at the upper end of the room. The lounge was against the wall lengthwise, giving him a full sweep of the room.

Two long windows of heavy plate glass, two feet in depth, ran the full length of the oblong-shaped room. Above and below each were two rows of book shelves, these also running the full length of the sides of the room, and filled to capacity with all manner of volumes. The posi-

tion of the windows in height, and depth of the frame, was such as to place all the shelves so the contents thereon could be examined without any undue stooping or straining, which in so many bookcases is objectionable to the seeking reader.

The windows, though bare of curtain or blind, were fringed with a dark green chintz, the pattern an odd buoy and anchor design, robbing the place of appearance of extreme bareness it might otherwise have had. The walls were covered with a heavy paper, void of design, the colour the queer green of a cold sea just as dark.

But Kane did not note these things at the moment, for immediately his eyes were focussed on the girl of the night before, this mysterious, hyperborean superwoman of the lonely arctic waste.

She was seated at the table, her back to him, busily writing; and he noted that her clothes were still those of the masculine seafarer in which he had first seen her. Her hair was piled, tier on tier like a new coiled harpoon line of three-inch manilla lying in its "tub." Under the play of the sunshine it was more alluring than before. It fascinated the millionaire. As he lay gazing, there returned again the desire to hold it in his hands, to let the thick, humanly moist strands slip through his fingers. Below it, what of the open, turned down collar, her neck showed a line of tan;

not the vulgar red of the summer boarder, but the deep bronze of long exposure to salt-tanged winds, and sun and sea.

At last as if made self-conscious by his gaze, she turned slowly. Her blue eyes met his.

"Well, not going to die," she said abruptly. She got to her feet, stood gazing at him very calmly, without any sign of embarrassment.

"I wasn't seriously thinking of it," he came back at her just as coolly.

"Humph; you had me guessing for a few days." She came to his side as she spoke, placed a cool hand lightly upon his forehead. Satisfied, she drew it away, went back to her big wicker chair, lounged down comfortably, and regarded him once more with an air of pleased satisfaction.

"What do you mean—*a few days*?" he asked.

"You've been sick over a week. Haugen landed you an awful clout. You're lucky to be alive. You got a gash in your skull a quarter of an inch deep."

At this Kane raised his hand tentatively, and became aware that his head was neatly bandaged.

"And you nursed me?"

She nodded. "You better quit talking; never can tell, the fever might come back."

"But I'm better now," Kane protested. Suiting action to the word he half rose.

"Damn it!" she snapped. The next instant she

had leaped to his side, would have pressed him down, only from very weakness he forestalled her in action.

Surprised, oddly shaking all over, he lay staring up into her frowning face.

"Might have known you'd do some damn fool trick. All men the same. Skuli near dead with fever, but he had to get up and walk. Now promise you'll be quiet till I say."

He smiled his promise.

Then, less severely, she explained: "You've had a touch of brain fever in the wake of that tap. You've no idea how it brings you down."

Abruptly she left him, went on deck, her body moving lithely, easily, with slight sea roll, but with all a perfect grace.

"What an odd girl," Kane marvelled. Then he fell to wondering who Skuli, the other fever patient had been, and what relation he and the man Haugen were to her. But more than anything lingered in his memory the music of her voice, its velvety husky toning, rich and softly throaty, that even when raised in angry rebuke was neither harsh nor shrill; and the eye of peculiar Norwegian blue. Despite the girl's boyish friendliness, Kane, as he had looked into her eyes, had become conscious of the mild mysticism lurking there; felt subtly the innate reserve that lay behind. Something in them, veiled though it was,

told of a nature tending to brooding, to faint melancholy—that trait so much a part of her race, a race bred for a thousand years in land of midnight sun, and long nurtured to the ways of the sea. Certainly she was wonderful, he mused on; her very profanity was lovable, so unconsciously was it uttered; frankly, honestly, right from the heart it came, man-like in its sincerity.

Kane had heard women swear often before; but never until now had it not displeased him. "Lord!" he voiced aloud, carried away by admiration, "what a superb creature—voice! hair! walk!—everything perfect! What a sensation she'd make in a San Francisco drawing-room!"

In the wake of these thoughts, his mind went running on, a varied, chaotic train of thought.

Man's love for woman is a peculiar psycho-physical thing. It may be brought about by many different causes, or through a combination of many. As a rule he does not love impulsively, uncalculatingly as woman does, to whom love is almost all of life, and in whom it is an all prevailing desire. With woman, love is a normal outpouring of feeling, a natural need which she can neither control nor resist. Thus, normally, her choice of mate is a blindly instinctive action, in which reason has little if any place.

But man is swayed upon so many sides, that love to him is more an acquired than natural

emotion, for he is so strange a combining—the mingling of the instincts and desires of the wild stallion, the bull moose and the seal lie strong upon him, yet side by side with these are still higher, spiritual feelings of a god, and the vanities of a monkey. On the one hand he desires beauty of face and form in his prospective mate; she must have charm of voice and grace of motion; but above all, she must be different. Thus the bizarre, the unusual, the strange flowers in the garden of the world's womanhood are the most quickly plucked. For that matter, even the man choosing plain and commonplace wife, still sees in her that something of difference. This thing he craves; yes, demands, if not there in reality, is still there to him; through a weird state of self hypnosis, with which man has fortunately been able to delude himself since the dawn of time, and without which ability the world would be to him a most sorry place.

Kane had been friendly in a various degree with many women of widely different station. Half of San Francisco's wealthy mamas, possessed of eligible daughters, had hunted him assiduously. Still he had loved none of these, nor yet any woman of other sphere. He loved no one now. But, true to man nature, this unusual woman of the sea, this modern shield-maiden, by very reason of her difference had vastly roused his interest.

She was, he admitted to himself, within an inch of six feet. And he knew from carrying experience that her weight could not be less than one hundred and eighty pounds. Yet, for all, she lacked not in grace. Her face was strikingly, uniquely beautiful. There was, in fact, something impressive, something majestic and grand about her—her hair, her features, the perfect carriage and the proud poise of her head.

During the next few hours, a strange man, huge and blonde, came in twice and waited upon him in silence. Not until the sun had dropped so low its rays were cut off by the fore part of the ship did the girl return. She brought him supper; coffee, biscuits peculiarly light and wholesome, eggs, from powder created, and some tinned pears. After the long weeks of the *Ena's* bad fare, the meal to him was a veritable feast. Propped up by pillows she had placed about him, Kane ate it. Seated in her wicked chair she waited.

When the last morsel had vanished, she set the tray upon the floor and regaining her seat remarked: "You'll soon be all right now."

He nodded. Then struck by a quite natural thought Kane said wonderingly: "Why do you take care of me here. Why not the quarters amidship, or the forecastle?"

"For one thing, there's no room among the

men; and the fore-castle has been turned over to the Esquimaux. Besides this was handiest for me, being near my bedroom."

A silence fell. Kane broke it. "I'll be better soon now; am I accepted as one of the crew?"

"Oh, I guess so. But you can't go about much for a week or so yet. You see, the main thing now is to get that gash healed without getting cold into it."

"I'm afraid it'll take my whole voyage's wages to pay for this medical and nursing attendance," he said smiling.

Her reply to this was characteristically surprising: "Oh, I'll take my pay for that out of you in conversation."

He eyed her puzzledly; said quizzically: "Why, what can you find interesting in the talk of a poor sailorman?"

"Sailorman! You're no sailorman! I thought that when I revived the other night and you were holding a strand of my hair. Now, after listening to you for the last week, I'm sure of it."

"Listening to me!" Kane's voice was wondering. "Why, I haven't said a hundred words in your hearing."

"Oh, you haven't, eh! Say, you've been babbling away here for a whole week. That was when I hadn't you so full of dope you stayed quietly asleep."

"That was absolutely unethical; you took very unfair advantage, a thing no doctor or nurse would think of doing." Kane retorted with pretended indignation. He wondered curiously to himself just what he had said during those days of delirium.

"Perhaps so," she admitted, "but it was interesting."

"Then it wasn't just chance happening that you listened? You sat down and did it deliberately; did it when you could as well have been somewhere else?"

"Most certainly. It was interesting."

"Oh, I see, ethics are not to be considered so long as you are entertained." Kane's words were half bantering, half serious.

"Have it that way if you like," she conceded, without any apparent remorse at having eavesdropped on his delirium.

"Well," Kane again took up the thread of conversation, "even admitting I'm not a sailor, why should my conversation be particularly desirable when you've got plenty of men around you?"

"Yes; plenty of men, and the best in the world." She said this last with a loyal fervour. "But they can only meet me on certain ground. They're not educated; and after nearly two seasons up here, I've just been hungry to talk to someone of things other than whales and oil and ropes and all the

business of the day which really does get a little monotonous at times. That's why I was almost glad Haugen walloped you. You see," she ran on explanatorily, seeing the frown with which Kane greeted this last, "it gave me a chance to talk with you as an invalid, to entertain you here. Of course, I could have done it anyway," this last defiantly. "But the men would have thought it queer, perhaps been offended if I had made a guest of you in your able-bodied form—and my men are a great deal to me." Her blue eyes softened; an almost tremulous light filled them for the briefest space of time, a motherly expression, seeming the more odd to Kane as he mentally called up the vision of the two giants of this ship's crew he had so far glimpsed.

"But your father?" Kane put the feeler cleverly, his tone that of offhanded disinterestedness.

"I haven't any. I'm master here." In her voice was a tinge of impatience, a sharpness almost of resentment, carrying to Kane a warning to pry no further.

Thus effectually cut off from any discoveries along this line he fell back to bantering. "So you think my conversation will be interesting?"

"The conversation of any man with the knowledge of a high school boy is worth while just now, if for nothing else than to get me back into the

habit of speaking English," she replied unflatteringly.

Kane noted now, with her mention regarding speaking English, the purity of her speech. Accent there was, to be sure, a quaintness of expression; yet this smacked not of foreignness, was rather individual, a personal difference, not one of nationality. Still, he reasoned, English must be to her a foreign tongue.

"How do you wish your conversation fees paid? Shall I talk so many minutes each day on art, literature, etcetera?"

"There; I knew it."

"Knew what?"

"I knew you'd be an interesting talker." Then, as if suddenly remembering something else, she got quickly to her feet, and came over to him and began removing the propping pillows, remarking as she did so: "There, that's enough talk just now. You must be quiet; rest. Brain's a funny thing. You might appear better and not be." With careful, gentle hands, she let him down to a more fully reclining position, putting the extra pillows now on the floor beside him. She put her cool, firm hand to his forehead, and he closed his eyes blissfully. Vaguely surprised he realised that he was very tired. Easily as a child he dropped to sleep.

It was after she had brought him breakfast

the next morning he suddenly remembered to question her about the raid.

She laughed gleefully, as she did there came to her eyes the fierce fighting look he had seen on that first night, a primitive, predatory flashing that changed her for the moment into a sexless being.

"We fixed them," she exulted. Then rattled on, her manner peculiarly masculine, hugely pleased: "If it hadn't been for you I'd have had a pot shot or two at them myself." There was such infinite regret in her voice, Kane was forced to smile.

"That reminds me," she said, discontinuing the story, "I've got one of your ship mates working with the crew."

"Oh, Starns."

"Is that his name. The Esquimaux think he's a great Angekok, that's their word for medicine man or conjurer. What's the matter with him, anyway?"

"He's half-witted, for one thing; and at times is seized with fits of laughing he can't control. They come on him at the oddest times. I've no idea what causes it."

"The Esquimaux are all afraid of him. Haugen found them all huddled up around the forecastle hatch watching him. He was rocking and laughing away fit to kill. I was puzzled of

course when I heard of it, but figured it was something like that, but he was soon all right. He seemed so pleased to be captured; was tickled to death, in fact, that I put him to work."

As she paused, and before she could go on, Kane, hearing such typically North American expressions as "fit to kill" and "tickled to death," said catechisingly: "Say, you're an American, aren't you?"

"Still anxious to know my life history, eh?" she shot back at him, but this time her tone was good humoured. "Now, see here, mister man, I'm hiring you for your conversation, not to ask questions." There was a mock severity in this last, that was not lost on him.

"I beg your majesty's pardon," he answered, falling into the spirit of the moment. "Will your majesty proceed with the description of the defeat of Devil Maclean."

"Well," she proceeded, "about a minute after your half-wit began to laugh, Haugen and Skuli were on deck and in another the rest of the men were at their heels. It didn't take them a minute to get into action and begin peppering the fellows pulling away with our boats. High up on deck as they were, and protected by the railing they had all the advantage. Skuli and Haugen are both dead shots, so they quickly picked off the two men that were rowing away our whaleboats. Then

Devil Maclean and his men in their own two boats made a brave try to tow them, but they were an awful drag and slowed their going. Skuli and Haugen would have picked them all off I guess if they hadn't let them go and started to row fast away. Then the men quit firing. Some of the other men and a couple of the Esquimaux lowered the starboard boat and went after the two boats." She paused a moment, then added admiringly: "That Devil Maclean sure has nerve."

"Yes," Kane admitted. "He and his brother, and perhaps the boatsteerers. As for the rest," he snapped his fingers, "why the whole lot haven't the nerve of a louse. They were scared to come, but more scared not to, so great is their fear of the captain."

"You included?" she asked quickly.

"I refuse to classify myself."

"At least, it takes nerve to climb unarmed aboard a strange ship with the intention of lowering her boats away," she said magnanimously.

"If I'd been alone on the job, I'd take that as a compliment, but as I was accompanied by at least two men I'm perfectly sure were lacking in any form of bravery, I'm afraid I can't accept it."

"I'm sure you're not a coward." She voiced the words so sincerely, with such an evidence of conviction that Kane felt a sudden desire to thrust his chest away out. But he only said, quite stiffly:

"Thank you. I hope I may have the opportunity to justify your belief."

At this evidence of grand air, she laughed, an infectious, husky rippling cadence, thrilling him afresh, filling him with joy that he was here.

They talked aimlessly for some time, discussing various commonplace matters. Then suddenly with a return of her old imperious manner she brought the conversation to a close as upon the previous day, and began removing the bandage. He felt her strong, long, fine fingers touching here and there. After a moment she uttered several little clucks of satisfaction. Then she adjusted fresh bandage, laid ready to hand sometime before, and prepared him for sleep.

Almost instantly he closed his eyes. It was always surprising to him this consciousness of his weakness. It made him almost ashamed. For some time he lay thoughtful, with eyes closed, going over the conversation of their two brief meetings. Truly it was a situation full of piquancy.

Yet in spite of the girl's frank avowal of desiring his company, her evident eagerness for conversation with one of her own sphere, Kane conceived no misunderstanding from it. Fully he realised that none of the sex tricks of the average woman had any place in this sea-girl's make-up. Evidently from her words and manner,

the fearlessness with which she had fought him, her strength, and the air of camaraderie with which she treated him, she had been all her life meeting men as a man—frankly, openly, even roughly. To attempt cheap flirtation as a possibility to light love later, he was fully aware would quickly rob him of a companionship which was already becoming fascinating.

To be absolutely fair to Kane, no amorous intention in the girl's direction had arisen in his mind—and the silent, masculine northland is cruel to men in this respect! For the moment his feelings toward her were a mingling of gratitude for her care, and strongest curiosity regarding her life history. Thus cogitating, his thoughts soon blurred in drowsiness. He fell asleep.

It was a good five hours later when he woke. Following a habit already formed he looked immediately to where she usually was.

Just as yesterday, she was seated writing, her back to him, her glorious, high-piled hair rising coil on coil above her brown-tanned neck. Prepared to drop his lids in feigned sleep, should she turn unexpectedly, so as not to give the impression of his watching her, Kane feasted his eyes upon the girl. As before she was dressed in the coarse blue shirt and mackinaw trousers, but for the moment the sea boots had been laid aside, and in their place she now wore heelless Chinese slip-

pers. He noted how neat, almost small, were her feet. The trousers were "stagged" after the fashion of some sailors and woodsmen, the legs cut so the ends reached just a little below the knee, revealing legs stout but perfectly tapered. Even though cased in heavy woollen socks, which make for shapelessness, Kane saw they were limbs truly womanly, perfect to a degree.

He had regarded her steadily for some time when the pencil fell from her hand to the table top with faint rattle of wood on wood. She heaved a disconsolate little sigh, a mingling of weariness and dissatisfaction. A minute she sat in attitude despondent, elbows on the table, chin resting in cupped hands, then got to her feet and turned around with motion so unexpectedly quick that she caught Kane's eyes full upon her.

"Oh; you awake." For the first time since their acquaintance he sensed she was embarrassed.

"Only half," this with vast show of having just emerged from sleep.

He saw she did not believe him. But the next moment she was quite as usual. Coming over she helped him to sit up, adjusting the pillows once more in place. "You do sleep a lot, and it's just the thing." She made her way back to her chair, turned it to face him and sat down again.

As she did, he noted on the table behind her,

what was apparently a cheap scribbler of school book type, open near the middle.

She seemed depressed. So by way of cheering, Kane resorted to the bantering tone of yesterday. "What are you doing; writing that life history you refuse to divulge?" His humour was ill-timed.

A look of almost hopelessness settled on her face. "No; just trying to write another in the series of 'The Great American Novel'; but the work didn't go very well to-day. I work so hard on it; then, when I compare it with the work of other worth while writers, it seems so poor, so lacking in all the things the other books contain. And I do so want to write something that will be of worth, something that will help to make things better."

Never before until this moment had she appeared to Kane as fully feminine, the all-woman. Hearing her voiced discouragement, seeing the unhappy light in those unfathomable Norwegian eyes, his whole being thrilled. He felt drawn irresistibly to her. A vast and wondering admiration for her was born.

Speech for the moment was impossible. He only gazed at her, all the emotions swaying him speaking through his eyes. "God!" he thought exultantly, "here is the superwoman; sailor of high seas; master of ship and men; a man-dress-

ing, man-swearing, man-equalling divinity, yet fair and womanlike, despite seaboots and mack-inaws; a rover of the dreary arctic, pursuing grimy trade, yet still an artist, turning eager, yet painstaking and reverent hand to careful creation of a book—and how true her artistry when she mourned its weakness!" With this last thought there came to the man a long-forgotten scene of a great San Francisco home where often he had seen congregated a vain coterie of lesser poets and writers of prose, near-greats, posing, strutting, talking loudly of this and that, criticising, tearing to pieces the work of really master minds; an envious, vapid, embittered group, emitting mediocre utterances with an air they thought befitted genius, all unrealizing that unostentation and simplicity marked the truly great.

Then feeling the silence growing painful, he spoke. And being so inwardly stirred, his mind aglow with new-come admiration, an all-filling homage, and wishing to express his faith in her, he said: "You say, or did I misunderstand you, that you are trying to write another in the series of 'The Great American Novel'? I always thought '*The Great One*' was yet to be written." Then, by reason of his admiration for her, he added quite sincerely: "Perhaps your book will be *The One* for which the critics have so long waited."

At this, to his great astonishment, she leaped to her feet, all aflame with sudden anger. Pounding the table top with knotted fist, so it gave off sound like a drum, her wave of berserk fury turning the pale ivory of her wondrous Norwegian complexion to bright rose, her eyes blazing bitterness and scorn, she hurled upon him a flooding torrent of impassioned words.

"Oh, the critics! The mummified wiseacres! Those near-sighted worms and fossils so lost in the maze of the literature of the past, so servile in the worship of masters dead as to be too blind to proclaim the glory of the new! And yet it is they to whom the majority of readers pay unquestioning homage. It is they who mould and make and warp the views of the many. What empty numb-skulls they are shown by their ever echoed cry about 'The Great American Novel' that is yet to be. The fools! The fools! The little brains! Had they but the eyes to see, emotions to feel, pulses that beat in the to-day, they would long ago have realised that the great American novel has been written not once but many times. Only men with mole-like, narrow vision, could fail to realise the impossibility of summing up in any one single volume the life of our American continent. Yet this the critics do. They have harped and do still harp on and on about it in countless reviews. They have made it a thing almost leg-

endary, this masterpiece that is some day to come, while, like the story of Hawthorne's about the great stone face, all the time before them, around them, in their very midst this great literary work of reproducing in word pictures the life of the American people is going toilsomely and faithfully on. Not by one volume, but dozens of volumes is it being consummated.

"Yet your critics, your gods of books, sit in their high places and parrot learnedly of the great English, French or Russian novel that so-and-so wrote in such-and-such a year; how perfectly this book sums up the life of its people, and bewail that nothing like it has ever been produced by a native of North America.

"As a matter of fact they are as wrong in this expression on foreign work as they are blind to the merits of those at home; for, of no one book, past, present or of the future, of any land, can it be said that it was that particular land's great novel, because life is too complex and varied, people too different of occupation, temperament and predilection in even the smallest country for any single book to correctly portray its all.

"And North America—more than any part of the world—needs not one but a thousand great novels to do it justice. With its vast area, so varied and different of topography and climate, making possible an infinite variety of enterprise,

labour and endeavour ; with its mines, mills, fields, factories, great cities and tremendous silent places each offering opportunity to countless men ; with all the millions of many races and tongues congregating here, fluxing and fusing and slowly forming what will be a unified and mighty nation in the future—with all this as pigment to make colour for the brush of words what wondrous things can the honest workman conjure !”

She paused breathless, her breast heaving. Her fist unclenched. Slowly her high colour ebbed away. But she was not through. In a moment she continued, though more slowly, her manner collected.

“This wonderful land of America lies at my feet, at the feet of every writer in it. A bit of it, each of us, in his own place and time and way, will portray as the years go on, just as it has been done before.”

Again her fist clenched. “And yet these damn critics whose words have weight, keep crying for the great American novel, when every phase of America’s manifold life has been described as skilfully, as faithfully to truth and reality by her writers as was ever that of any land of earth.”

As abruptly as she had begun she stopped. She dropped so heavily back into her seat the stout wicker creaked a protest. This lengthy outburst had evidently tired her. She did not look at

Kane. Her eyes were far away, unseeing. Indeed, all through her long harangue she had not spoken as to him, but as though addressing some vast throng gathered in enormous amphitheatre; addressing them with a speech long dwelt upon, long prepared, carefully made ready.

And Kane, utterly amazed, could think no words to say, so remained silent, his brain busy with thoughts of the woman and her strangeness. The vigour, the fire of her, the bizarre, virile figure she had cut standing there before the table, her clenched fist pounding the top, her eyes ablaze, her finely bowed mouth, sensitive yet strong, pouring forth torrential flood of words, all had stirred the man anew.

Kane had been an omnivorous reader of wide range, but not a very thoughtful one. As for her long harangue, bitterly vigorous, a little incoherent in spots, but still a masterly marshalling and delivery of her opinion, he failed to see the necessity of so strong feeling on a question apparently so inconsequential. In a dim vague way he did remember that the question of the great American novel was a matter of much surmise and discussion. But her utterances were at least interesting, giving him as they did a conception of the strange line her thoughts had taken. Evidently, moving always among men of inferior intellect, making books her constant and only

companion, had tended to too much indwelling, too much introversion, resulting in a warped viewpoint, and to the giving of a vast and untruthful importance to inconsequential things. But the entire episode—her desire to create a worth while book—and her confession of dissatisfaction that in workmanship it failed to rise up to a literary quality desired and striven for, had tended to place her still higher in Kane's estimation—an estimation which now placed her upon a pinnacle of tremendous height.

This revealing of yet another side in a woman already so strikingly different, served but to increase his desire to know her more fully. In the wake of this emotion he suddenly and for the first time realised that though for two whole days she had occupied large place in his life and thoughts, he did not even know her name.

At last, feeling some expression was due, he said: "To tell you the truth, until you spoke just now, I never gave literary matters much thought. I've read quite a lot, and certainly, now I've heard your view, it seems to me you are right. But what surprises me is your vigorous Americanism. From your looks and the men you captain, I thought you a Norwegian. Now, after what you've said, I'm hopefully inclined to call you a fellow countryman. Are you an American?"

"If you mean by that was I born in the United

States; no. I'm an American in the larger, truer sense of the word. I was born in Halifax harbour, so legally I'm a Canadian. My mother was; my father was Norwegian. But I like to call myself an American, meaning by that a product of this continent, and people born on this continent, no matter what their parentage, undoubtedly belong to a new race."

"Which reminds me I don't know your name, and, you know, every man should know his nurse's name. In fact, according to the humour magazines and the comic papers, I believe it's customary he should fall in love with her."

Without rising to meet his banter, she answered simply: "My name is Elfrida Gaardsmoe. And yours?"

"Kane, William Kane, commonly known as Wild Bill, native son of California, at your service and much in your debt."

He was just beginning to hope that here at last he was to learn some of the woman's history when there arose a great shouting from the sea. Instantly came the sound of feet moving on the deck. Elfrida was on her feet in an instant. "They've come in with a whale; I've got to go." She dashed into her cabin, emerging in another minute high-booted and hurried out.

Kane watched eagerly the face of the big, set-in clock on the wall over the entrance doorway,

pointing to four when she left, hoping she would soon come back. But it was after seven before she returned, her eyes alight, her whole manner exultant.

"Some whale," she called to him as she went in to draw off her boots.

Emerging a minute later she came over and dropped into her accustomed seat. "Biggest yet," she went on gleefully, beating with her right hand a tattoo on the table top. "Sixty-five feet. Certainly a good move leaving my old grounds and coming here. This makes eight, at which rate I'll soon be rich." She was utterly metamorphosed. Flushed by this fresh conquest, eyes alight, her whole manner subtly conveying a savage exuberance, the woman of books and learning he had seen but a few hours before was gone.

She sat only a minute, then hurried out, calling back as she went: "Getting rich quick nearly made me forget your supper. Be back right off."

When he had eaten, and the tray was placed on the floor, Elfrida remarked in her usual and unexpected way: "Say, it's a damn unfair world, isn't it?"

And Kane realised that the girl of the afternoon was back again.

"Why, I don't know," he questioned slyly, adding: "Right now I find it an awfully good place. In fact, it's always been pretty good to me.

But why so pessimistic right on top of acquiring a whale of a fortune?"

"That pun is enough to make anyone pessimistic," she answered, smiling faintly. But she was in serious mood. She went on: "I'm not pessimistic. To say the world's unfair is only a common sense conclusion. Take that poor devil of a boy—Starns. It was really passing him a moment ago that brought the fact again so strikingly to me. Lately, what of being out here, where inequality of men don't count so much, nor make anyone's living conditions unbearable, I haven't thought of the question. Of course," she added hastily, "I've settled all such questions long ago in my mind, and am living out my life accordingly, but—leaving all that aside, I haven't changed the world, and, you know, every man and woman is a missionary in his own way, so, seeing Starns just made me want to talk. Poor fellow, born of little wit, he lives on drearily, enjoying life very little, and there are thousands upon thousands like him; even those with normal brains are no better off than he."

Her blue eyes had become luminous, their colour deepening to darkest hue, like the water of the sea at dusk, a peculiarity Kane came to know attended her serious moods. "But why worry?" he said deprecatingly. "It isn't your fault if men are born unequal." Even as he said

this, Kane realised that in spite of his just uttered words, it was this very phase of life that had of late been insistently obtruding upon his mind.

"I don't exactly worry," she replied. "But I do try to combat it. I guess perhaps anyone who takes the time to think does too." Then eyeing him sharply, she proceeded: "Perhaps you deem it silly to give thought to life conditions which one cannot personally change. Yet because one cannot effect an entire revolution, make all wrongs right, it is no reason why they should not go on and accomplish their little bit. But still there are hundreds of thousands of comfortably situated people the world over who manage very successfully to remain blind all their lives to the suffering and woe of the sweating millions around them. But with me, I found long ago that to go through life with any personal degree of satisfaction, I must come to a thorough understanding of myself and how it affected my relation to the rest of the world, and, once having done this, govern myself accordingly with my findings. Unless I did there could have been no peace of mind for me. Well, the fact that life was cruelly unfair, unjust to the many, overkind to the few, was one of the main conclusions I arrived at early in the course of forming a working philosophy of life by studying the scheme of things."

To her words Kane had listened eagerly, hun-

grily. He was intensely interested; for since that first day aboard the *Ena* life had taken new shape to him. By reason of his recent experiences, his mind had come fiercely active with strange puzzling thoughts, questionings and wonder, bringing realisation how wanting he was in a worth while philosophy, and how necessary a thing it was.

"A thorough understanding of life, and how it affected my relations to the rest of the world." How succinctly she had just expressed the thing he now so ardently coveted. So he said very eagerly: "Then you have arrived at a philosophy? Won't you tell me of it! You see, I've just recently realised how badly I'm in need of one. It came about the other day through seeing a little of the world's unfairness; as you say, each of us should do our bit toward relieving it. And now I want to do mine."

She heard him with widening eyes. "And is it just the other day you found out the world was unfair? Why that fact made me uncomfortable while I was still in short skirts." Her manner was fairly scornful; but quickly she relented. "Please forgive me, I'm always speaking hastily. I realize I ought to be charitable to even such as you. Perhaps you are not so much to blame for being blind to the harder facts by very reason of your bringing up and your environment carrying you through life in a sphere so fine as to leave

you actually ignorant of what awful conditions half the world lives under. Of course anyone who reads the papers shouldn't be ignorant; but perhaps, because of your environment, you and others like you don't gather the full meaning of the squalid stories set forth almost every day."

"And your philosophy," he repeated, gently turning her back on tangent. And so deeply was he engrossed, her apparent certainty of his regular condition of life, did not now strike him as it would on another occasion.

She smiled brightly, a little pleased and flattered by his interest. She had been so long alone, so lacking in congenial companionship, that her whole being responded joyously to it. And she said: "I suppose perhaps I'd better tell you a little of that life history you have been so anxious about, because it really has a bearing on the subject."

"I know of nothing I was ever more anxious to hear," he replied with such boyish enthusiasm they both laughed.

"Then I'll continue in the approved way: My father, Hallgrimmer Gaardsmoe, was born in a little coastal village on Stjerno Sound. At fifteen he went to sea. At twenty-eight he had a captain's certificate, and at thirty had acquired a controlling interest in the *Varangian*. From some some earlier trips to the Hudson Bay whaling

grounds he saw the possibilities of the field. You know," she broke off, "some men seem born to succeed in certain callings. Father's was whaling. There isn't a whaler that won't tell you it's the greatest luck game in the world. Perhaps it is; I don't know. But I do know that year after year he took whales when other crews got none. The Scotch and American shipmasters who sailed in there called him 'The Lucky Swede.' Perhaps those men were right, and it was just luck, but I can't think so. You see, father made whales his life study. He figured out their likes and dislikes in connexion with the waters of Hudson Bay; how greatly their movements were controlled by the ice drifts, and continental configuration, and, oh, an endless collection of data." She waved her hand toward the bookcase. "It's all in a book over there. It deals particularly with the Hudson Bay whaling ground in the vicinity of Fox Channel and Roes Welcome, from Cape Fullerton to the head of Repulse Bay. But there are still a whole lot of his theories and beliefs I find work out right here. Of course, he regarded his notes as very precious, just as some old firms hold certain trade secrets, so he never would trust his writings into the hands of any printer. But finally, one time at Halifax, after I'd got them all in shape, he let me bring a stenographer aboard. The four hundred typewritten pages over there

are the result. But I'm digressing. Anyway, the first voyage he made in the *Varangian* was so successful he acquired full ownership of it and had a nice sum left over.

"All his life he had been a deep thinker, a student of life, a reader. Every time he was in port he'd stock up with no end of books." Again she waved her hand in direction of the bookcases. "A lot of these are his buying, though of course I've added to the collection. After this first trip, having done so well, he naturally gravitated to a bookstore. He was an enormous man, six feet four, blue-eyed and blonde. I can remember yet how people used to turn in the street and stare after him. This trip he put into Boston, a firm there having offered him the best price for his catch.

"It was during his raid on a bookstore there, he met my mother. She was a Nova Scotian, and like so many of them drifted to this nearby city in the United States where opportunities were better at the time. She was clerking in the bookstore father descended upon. She was a great reader, and very well posted. While waiting on him, they got talking and he became interested in her. On the other hand, that so huge a man, whose every line fairly shrieked of the sea, should evidence so wide a knowledge of books, perhaps first attracted her to him. I don't know. But anyway, to cut it

short, they fell in love. It certainly was rather romantic, for, hater of towns and land as he was, he kept the *Varangian* lying in Boston harbour two whole months, and would have been there longer I suppose if she hadn't consented to be his. She made a real sailor's wife, happy to travel with her husband always upon his ship.

"Then by and by I came. In fact," she smiled, "I've been told they just put into Halifax harbour in time to properly receive me.

"When I was eight years old mother died. So I grew up on a whaling ship with only men for companions, a man for a teacher. It was father's one great regret I hadn't been a boy. But being otherwise, he made the best of it, and I was brought up as I suppose few girls have ever been. I learned to go aloft, to reef and break out sail, in storm as well as shine, to take my place in the whaleboat. I learned to harpoon with the best of boatsteerers, and became a competent navigator, and hold a captain's papers. And how proud he was of my male accomplishments! In fact, when I made good, so good as to be the equal of any man, I think he was reconciled and almost pleased I was a girl after all. Oh, yes; thanks to father I'm as good as the best of men at sea!" As she said this last her eyes sparkled, a subdued exultation was in her voice's velvety husky toning, and Kane thought how like she was

to a Viking old, with her man-pride, her man-strength and self reliance.

"At the same time," she continued, "I delved into the world of books. Perhaps too many and too deeply. Looking back at it now I realise that a mixture of philosophy, science, biology, economics and the like—Darwin, Spencer, Henry George, with an added sprinkling of all kinds of works, fiction, travel and so on, was not perhaps the best kind of reading for a growing girl. Of course I read much I didn't half understand, but each fresh book put behind gave me greater grasp to better meet the next.

"And so I grew. At eighteen began to grow a desire for a philosophy of life. I didn't realise it fully then. I know I brooded too much. All this due of course to my reading, my father's educating and the peculiar place I occupied in life. At first my philosophy was an odd compromise between pessimism and the ebullition of youth. It summed up something like this: 'What's the use? But keep agoing.'

"That is my pessimism—book-acquired from reading too much philosophy, and conjecturing raised by this and seeing much that wasn't pretty in life in various seaports—said to me: 'What's the use of living; it's futile and mostly nasty?' But on the other hand my young, life-giving blood

and brain and body said: 'Keep agoing; life's pretty good.'

"Naturally such fluxing state of mind couldn't last, and I finally won away from it something after this fashion. I said to myself: 'If life's no good, futile, not worth while, then why not end it?' And right there I discovered—as I think every other sane minded man and woman who have ever faced squarely similar state of mind must have done—that life is a peculiarly fascinating thing, even though we are denied an answer to the four great questions: 'What? Whence? Why? Where?' concerning it.

"Are you still interested?" she broke off, turning questioning gaze upon him.

"Immensely." Both his manner and tone were so convincingly sincere as to be subtlest flattery that she said, in the glad tone of an experimenter announcing the success of some finding: "You make me almost hope for my book. You see, it's all so built around a woman's thoughts on life; at her arriving at conclusions, just like I'm talking to you now, and her suggesting ways for world betterment, that sometimes it occurred to me no one would be interested. Then, I'd look at my shelf of philosophers, and say to myself: 'Well, if there were people interested in reading all those premises, theories, conjectures on existence, there will certainly be some people interested in my

book, for after reading all those metaphysicians, a person is just where he started: he finds out they know nothing of life; that the questions what? why? whence? where? are unsolvable.

"That's what I began my book with: 'To know that one knows nothing is the height of wisdom.' With such premise to start with, all speculation as to the why and wherefore of things is banished. There only remains to be considered actualities. I'm afraid I'm making this horribly complicated, what with father's history and mine and my book," she said fearfully, with a funny little knot in her brow.

But Kane, with a flash of psychological intuition, sensed this was one of those rare moments that come to a certain type of thinkers, a moment when they must talk, and he said most emphatically: "No; please go on; I'm following you, and very much interested."

Well, anyway, at twenty, I finally came to an understanding with myself. I said to myself: 'I am a human being—whatever that is. I am here on a place called earth among a lot of other creatures very like myself, who are so variously endowed as to be divided roughly into two classes: the directing and the executing breed. I can't help it if an unjust system of economics springs from one man being endowed by Nature with a two hundred dollar a day brain, and another with

only a dollar and a half a day one. In the scheme of things I am of the directing, or master breed. Of this I shall remain, without being unjust to anyone. I do not know why I am as I am, so that I have wealth, comfort and an executive ability to maintain this, while another man—Starns, for instance, is an example—has none of these things, and so suffers to some extent.

“But because Nature has made men so, is no reason I should take advantage of my position and let less fortunate ones continue in their misery, or act in such manner as to lend myself to causing such, but is all the more reason I should devote myself to helping those less endowed.

“Just about the time I reached this decision, my father died. He’d been ailing for several years, caused by some inward trouble he brought upon himself by strain. That’s the trouble with over-strong people; they become so used to exerting themselves enormously that one day they overdo it.

“Everything he owned was left unconditionally to me. Thus I found myself at twenty with a two hundred thousand dollar cash bank-roll and a four hundred ton ship. That was six years ago. I stood alone. I was master of navigation. I loved the sea, and I was the equal of most men in strength. All my life I had lived as a man; thought as one. I knew nothing of women. In

all those years nothing had been hidden from me. My father believed in looking at life frankly. And in the years of sailing and seeing many sea-ports I had witnessed much of life's raw side; and come to know a great many things from reading. And right then I saw my way to putting my working scheme of life into practice.

"You know, there are some men who just can't take care of themselves. Sailors as a class are a striking example. Right on board my ship I had eight of the finest examples. They were Norwegians, and every man jack of them had been with father at least ten years; some of them like Skuli and Haugen, had been with him since the first voyage of the *Varangian*. The whole lot of them were as helpless as a bunch of kids. He'd saved some of their money for them by refusing to pay them in full at the end of each voyage. So through his holding out, they each had something coming to them, when otherwise they'd have spent it each trip ashore with the rest of their wages. Of course, lots of times they kicked, grumbled, even made threats; but father always laughed at them. And in the end, once they were aboard and sober and broke, they were thankful. If it hadn't been for his doing that they would have been as poor at the end of the last voyage they sailed with him as the first. As it was when he died each man had several thousand dollars

apiece to his credit. But if I'd sold the *Varangian* and paid them off in full they'd been broke in a month or so, and forced to find another ship. They'd have drifted on and on just as so many thousands of their kind do and end as charges of a none too kind society.

"So, on father's death, I appointed myself his successor as guardian of the crew. Of course, in this, I wasn't entirely unselfish, for I knew only the ways of the sea; I would have been unhappy on land; perhaps have been as much a sucker with my money as my men and wound up broke in a few years' time. So in staying with the *Varangian* to make provision for my men, I was also pleasing myself.

"But I felt I wasn't doing fully what my philosophy required. So, I tied up in Halifax for awhile, and cast about putting into operation a scheme I'd been long figuring on. My money was mostly in bonds and first mortgages of unquestioned soundness, bringing six per cent. I sold enough of these to realise seventy-five thousand dollars. With part of it I built an old sailors' home. It now shelters thirty inmates. At present it costs me six thousand a year to run it. The balance of my money brings in more than enough in interest to meet this, and so the home is guaranteed perpetuity, for I've resolved not to touch the capital. Besides this I established

another building near it, a hotel for sailors ashore or out of work. Both places are run by people thoroughly trustworthy, and who I know from careful trying out are kind in their dealings. At the hotel fifty men can be taken care of. If they have money they are supplied at a much lower rate than elsewhere. The food is good, the rooms small but neatly and cleanly furnished. In connexion there is a library, a pool room and a bar where beer only is sold. If a man is broke he is taken care of until he gets another ship, when the bill is taken out of his advance in the usual way. The men are not preached to or catechised on religious subjects as is so often the case with certain kinds of seamen's homes. All nationalities and denominations are welcome. No questions are asked. If a man throws away his own money, it's his own business. The only thing we do is to offer to bank a certain part of a seaman's money. I have no use," she broke off, growing heated, "for the inactive Christianity of the average church-goer. I got my fill of church members when I started my home. Thanks to some of these people's butting in I saw how much denominational hatred plays a part with all the churches, making for intolerance, narrow views and petty meanness. 'Help a man save his money, and he will himself conserve his soul'—if there is such a thing—is my claim. What I mean

is that the possession of a certain amount of money makes for self respect in a man; and once a man has self respect, it's pretty certain he'll lead a fairly decent life, which is not necessarily a religious or church-going one.

"Anyway, once a seaman's money is placed in my hands, or that of my representatives, he cannot have it again unless to invest in such a thing as a home, or to be paid out in hospital and doctor fees; or, in case of slack times it goes to pay his support while idle. The institution has been running four years now, and so far managed to pay expenses, which is more than I hoped for. At the same time we have more than two hundred men with savings accounts started, which pay them four per cent.

"And all the time I have the *Varangian* to make money with. If I keep on being as successful at whaling as I have been doing I'll be able to start one of my homes in another port soon. In time I may be able to build a whole string of them.

"As I said before, there are men who have to be taken care of to a certain extent. How vast the number is is almost unbelievable. They exist in all the ranks of life. I'm specialising in helping sailors to help themselves.

"Of course, many people connected with the two and twenty different world-reform movements, will point out that what I have done has

been on a faulty foundation: that I keep up my institution from interest on invested capital; that the interest I pay my men on their savings is derived from the same source, the coming forth of all of which money depends on profits gained from making some men unduly toil. But I had to take the world as I found it. Besides, their solutions of this question of a system of economics which will do away with all profit and yet be fair to everyone is a good deal like religions—there are a hundred different brands all guaranteeing a way to heaven, celestial and industrial; the truth of none of which has ever been established. The trouble with the world reformers is they haven't sufficiently taken into consideration the fact that Nature is anti-socialist in her scheme, and that only by steps ponderously slow can she be combatted. The present system of economics has succeeded because it's based on selfishness; dog eat dog, the survival of the fittest. From what I've learned by studying men aboard ship and during my occasional stays on shore, I find almost every worker hopes some day to be a boss and drive the other fellow. But there are only a few of the many constituted by Nature to drive the other fellow. Man does not necessarily need to drive his fellow man so that he suffers. In this world there is more than enough for all. What is needed is a new race of master breed."

She paused, in her manner now that peculiar something of an orator studying his audience in a moment of silence before proceeding.

She had talked with the same air of earnestness as when recently voicing her opinion on matters literary, speaking rather as a deep thinker, long withheld from giving tongue to aims, views and ideas, than an ordinary conversationalist. It was as though all the things she now gave voice to were part of a speech long and carefully prepared, waiting only the proper hour of delivery. That her audience was but one individual did not matter. And Kane was a most receptive one. His face showed his interest. He was about to give voice to a thought, when, as if aroused again by a fresh flood of ideas within demanding expression, she leaned forward in her chair and went on, once more the orator, the deep thinker pouring forth words carefully thought out, long pondered over, made worth while by much preparation.

“What is needed is a new race of master breed. Cities, civilisations, manners and customs of men, die, are forgotten. This only has never changed: *that the strong shall rule the weak.*”

“Here in North America, your country and mine, arose a master breed of men. At first, in the early days of the country, the weak did not suffer. The land was so rich, there was more

than enough for all. There is still more than enough for all, but the master breed of to-day have lost their heads, gone mad. They have gained control of the necessities and the luxuries of life. There is still enough for all. But what do you find? Warehouses and wholesale and retail stores filled to overflowing with furniture and clothes and shoes, while whole families go ragged, their entire furnishings a few rickety chairs and dirty mattresses. With elevators, and cold storage warehouses filled with grain and meat, little children are under nourished in the midst of plenty.

“All unnecessary, faulty distribution, faulty organization. Yet most of the modern race of master breed look on uncaring. They have gathered around them hirelings to carry on their business, satellites and parasites to amuse them, mercenaries to protect them, and selected pseudo-scientists, -writers, -philosophers, to quote Malthus and Darwin to show that such conditions are part of things that must be, and so excuse themselves of all blame for the conditions of the blind masses groping in the dark, their paths terror-haunted by the fear of need. Ah, the master breed of to-day are not wise—and yet the toilers asked of them so little—enough food, clothes, and a roof over their heads, and to be

given work by which to earn it. With so simple demands, it were surely easy to comply.

“But what do you find? Periods of unemployment; jejune babes; starvelings; anæmic mothers; fathers who cry for work and go unheeded. And this is no new condition, a sudden thing which has lacked time for alleviation. In the work of Rabelais, written nearly four hundred years ago, I found these biting lines:

“‘Of mouths above a million, we
Can furnish you each hour,
Who, as the drone defrauds the bee,
Do others’ gains devour.’

“And in our own country, a new land and fresh, so early as half a century ago, Walt Whitman wrote:

“‘Many sweating, ploughing, threshing,
And then the chaff for payment receiving;
A few idly owning, and they
The wheat continually claiming.’

“The master breed that permitted such are the wrong kind; they must change or be swept away to give place to a new race, a directing breed who will rule the weak in way curbingly kind, guiding firmly but with a vast toleration, so that in a world where there is more than enough for all, each man shall find his fair share forthcoming for the work he has performed. All must be made happy; and those, by Nature gifted to com-

mand, must so exercise their powers that these will be a boon to the many and not a curse as to-day.

"What I have done, some will say, are merely palliatives. But if all the master breed would do the same, I think this world would be a pretty fair place to live in considering how unequal men's birthrights are. It would, at least be a beginning, the first step in many ponderously slow by which to combat a naturally savage Nature. My plan offers a passable Utopia. *It is a revolution among the master breed the world needs, not among the masses.*"

She stopped abruptly, her breast heaving slightly, her eyes alight with a strange mystic fire, the same as perhaps flamed in the eyes of an ancient, soothsaying Vala ancestress ten centuries before in apocalyptic moments.

After a moment she said, and in her manner and voice was an odd diffidence, a touch of shyness, as of reserved nature suddenly asserting and a little abashed after an unusual outburst: "There, I guess I've said enough. I could have summed it up much shorter something like this: 'Conjecture on the reason for life gets one nowhere. Acceptance of its actuality is the thing. This done, live your own life in such a way as to bring not only happiness and contentment to

yourself, but to as many as possible of those around you.' ”

And Kane, hearing, saw again that ghastly Mission House on the Barbary Coast; saw the crowd of sodden souls sitting sullenly there; saw the smug and unctuous Throttalem and his trio of ascetic tract-passing companions. And when the vision had passed, he raised his eyes and met hers squarely, and said very low, with feeling such as he had never felt before: “What a glorious philosophy.”

Engrossed in their conversation they had failed to notice the passing of the hours. The girl was about to make further remark when the sound of momentary conversation nearby outside on the deck, sharply distinct in the stillness, told her of the changing watch, for since Maclean's raid, one man now stood the regular watches through the night. Thus reminded of the midnight hour she got to her feet. “I must go to bed.” Halfway across the room, as an afterthought she called back: “Remember, you mustn't get well too soon; I've such a lot of things to talk about.”

CHAPTER EIGHT

Devil Maclean Hits Back

THOUGH the *Varangian's* crew was a capable one, and really did not require any supervision at such task as they were now engaged, it was so much a part of Elfrida's nature to be active in all the day's undertakings that she spent little time in the cabin when there was work to do. So the following day Kane had no opportunity for further conversation.

About nine o'clock his breakfast was brought in by Starns who informed him that he had been assigned as assistant to the cook, with a special appointment to wait upon Kane. To the millionaire, after the former somewhat glowering attendance of the burly Norwegian sailor, the half-wit, always smiling and willing as he was, proved quite a relief. After finishing his breakfast and when Starns had left, Kane felt so much stronger he decided to make a closer inspection of the library. So throwing off the covering he got to his feet. He was clad in a heavy bathrobe that gave off sweet odours faintly feminine, suggesting its former owner; for Elfrida, when

faced with the care of her strangely-come patient, had, with true womanly instinct, felt it a necessity that her charge should be denuded of his grimy sea clothes. None of the crew, however, being possessed of such non-essential things as nightrobes or pyjamas, she had met the deficiency out of her own wardrobe, much to the unconcealed amusement of Haugen who had performed the task of attiring the victim of his blow.

For all Kane's slightly larger bulk, the robe, while fitting close, was still not so tight as to be uncomfortable. Attired in this he now got shakily to his feet and went slowly around the room, inspecting the books which lined the two long walls of the cabin. As he did so his astonishment grew. From her past conversation he had been prepared for a wide range of matter, but what he saw now was beyond even his expectation. Rabelais, Zola, France, Verlaine, Tolstoi, Shaw, Hardy, Meredith, Fielding, Hawthorne, Harte and Poe; Frank Norris, Howells, Upton Sinclair, and books by a dozen contemporary moderns held place upon these shelves. Volumes of philosophy too, by the master minds of the ancient and near past, rubbed shoulders with works on socialism and biology. Plato, Karl Marx, Henry George, Schopenhauer, Kant, and the work of poets old and new, Euripides,

Aristophanes, Omar Khayyam, Whitman, Longfellow, Whittier, Lowell, Byron, Shakespeare, as well as the works of many modern and lesser names gazed out from places evidently long held, but not in positions never disturbed, for the books by their bindings bore testimony of many openings, many times being removed and returned. There were many books bearing Norwegian names and titles foreign and unknown to him: Vigfusson's collected sagas; the Edda of Snorri Sturlason; Munch's history of the Norwegian people in eight volumes, and novels by Elster, Garborg and Hamsun. There were volumes on navigation, sea laws and sea lore, and several dealing with medicine. Books old and modern, practical, theoretical, philosophical and entertaining—a most fascinating collection.

But Kane was in no mood for reading. After a couple of turns up and down the room, feeling weary, he returned to his bed. Lying here he fell to pondering over her recent stirring speech, that had been the vigorous harangue of an impassioned orator, fired by desire for world regeneration, rather than the conversation of one acquaintance to another. Pondering, Kane wondered just what he had said during those days of delirium, and how much she really knew of him. Finally he closed his eyes and fell into one of those delicious reveries common to persons con-

valescing, a condition almost comatose, the mind wavering between awareness and the unconsciousness of sleep, a state of exhilarating stupor more fascinating, more entrancingly blissful than any state by drug created.

Out of this he was aroused by someone entering. He opened his eyes, then blinked them, closed them, opened them, but still he saw the same—coming toward him, dirty, gaunt and ragged, but with vigorous step and widest grin was Jimmy Shaler.

The reporter reached Kane's side before he could rise, and grasped his hand. Looking straight into the millionaire's eyes that still could hardly believe, he said: "Yes; it's me; sure enough, Jimmy Shaler."

Convinced now that this was no part of his glorious state of mind of the moment before, the millionaire got to a sitting position. "Really, I *shouldn't* be surprised!" he voiced, "for after what's happened in the last few weeks, I ought to be prepared for anything. But tell us about it; how'd you get here?"

Jimmy drew up a chair and sat down. "Not so fast, not so fast," Jimmy answered in his old breezy manner. "First, you better answer some questions. By what strange means do you now recline in state in such palatial surroundings? Is this some earthly Valhalla and have you won

the heart of Brünhild? But say, who is she?" Jimmy Shaler's curiosity was unbounded.

"You mean Miss Gaardsmoe," Kane answered with just a touch of stiffness. Somehow, for no reason at all, he felt an odd touch of resentment at Jimmy speaking so jestingly of his hostess. And for a moment, just why he could not understand, he wished this man of his own world had not come here so unexpectedly. But Kane was too true a friend for such feeling to last more than a moment.

"So you have already seen her?" he said.

"Certainly, certainly. But you haven't answered my question. Who is she?"

"Captain and owner of this ship and rather an unusual person."

"I should say." Jimmy exulted in his best news room manner. "My, what a 'Sunday feature' she'd make!"

Kane smiled in spite of himself. "Oh, that newspaper spirit!" he went on laughing, "truly, Jimmy, you reporters are the most loyal to the job people in all the world. But just remember you are a good many thousand miles from a typewriter or a telegraph wire. Tell us your story; how do you come to be here?"

"Oh, just a matter of legs," Jimmy answered. Then he proceeded to recount: "After the return of the boats from attacking the *Varangian*, I was

certainly worried for a little, then I figured that even captured you couldn't be worse off than you had been, and there was an even chance the people that grabbed you might be reasonable. I knew," this with a sly glance and a little chuckle, "that if you once got a chance to talk, your golden tongue and smooth manner would get you off easy. Well, on the *Ena*, what with one of the boatsteerers and Stokes killed and Cooper dying of pneumonia from the wetting he got jumping from the *Varangian* and the following exposure, and Sandy Maclean lying between life and death from a shot through the lungs, and the other boatsteerer and Walsh temporarily useless from flesh wounds, why things were in a bad way. We sailed quite a little way back up the coast and did take one small whale, but it was awful hard work. I was half hoping Maclean would put back to Nome or some other place, particularly when his brother was so bad, but not him! I think the man would stay and hunt whales all alone. After we finished cutting up the whale, Maclean decided to go inland and try and get some caribou. I guess he was afraid if he kept us on that 'brass-bosom' pork much longer we'd all be down with scurvy. I wasn't expecting to be chosen to go, but he picked me, Windle and Sparks. Say," Jimmy said abruptly changing the trend of his conversation, "that Maclean is a

long-headed boy! Do you know what he had rigged up in 'Frisco, just for such work? No less than a meat wagon. And some wagon! It had rubber-tyred, bicycle-style wheels, only a little larger and much stronger. The wagon had steel axle and tongue, all very light but strong, and a featherweight of a box about seven feet long by three and a half wide. I guess a half a ton of meat could be packed on it. And it pulled light as a toy over that tundra. He made Sparks and Windle the beasts of burden, while he and I carried a gun. I really got quite swelled on myself.

"Four days ago we put ashore and struck inland. Maclean is a good land man too. We headed south by east. The second night we made camp, it struck me all of a heap: why not make a getaway and head for the *Varangian*? I figured I couldn't be worse off than I was, and I might even do better. I knew from the men's talk and the distance we'd travelled, that you people were somewhere around thirty miles or so away."

"But, good heavens, Jimmy!" Kane interrupted, "for all you knew, the *Varangian* might have up anchored and been five hundred miles away."

"Yes, I thought of that—after I was well on my way." Jimmy admitted with a grin. "Anyhow, when everybody was fast asleep, I hiked

and kept agoin', and here I am. I came opposite the *Varangian* about an hour ago. After I'd wig-wagged my jacket till my arm was tired, who comes off in the dinghy but the lady captain and two of her monstrous Swedes, a regular Gargantuan trio. And they were as suspicious as a city editor of a story he thinks has an advertising boost tucked away in it. The captain and one of the monsters each had a rifle across their knees, and the fellow that was rowing another handy. They laid to about a couple of hundred feet offshore. Luckily the coast line all around wouldn't hide a fly, so there was no chance of me having a party in ambush; if it hadn't, I don't think they'd have come near. I sprung my story on her right quick. And of course the first thing in it asked for you. She kinda warmed up at this. 'Are you a friend of his?' she pulls. 'More than that,' I answered right back, figurin' to send you in strong, if you hadn't already done so for yourself, 'I'm his private secretary. We both got shanghaied in 'Frisco.' Well, everything was all right after that. The boat came ashore. I got in. Then, when the two imitation Pantagruels pulled us back, she tells me quite friendly how you been sick."

"And did she ask about who I was?" Kane asked.

Jimmy shot him a glance of withering scorn.

"Say, I didn't give her the chance. When I grasped that you were apparently in sorta half way good—of course I didn't dream anything like this—I immediately began playing up the part. I told her your name, and how you owned the half of California; that the very ship you were shanghaied in was your own, and a few more things. Then she admitted you'd told her your name, and of course I said: 'Then it's funny you didn't recognise right off who he was. Every ship's captain out of 'Frisco knows of the Kanes. Why, their name's in the history books of the state.' Naturally," Jimmy explained, "I figured that she being in these waters, must be sailing out of 'Frisco. But it seems not. She told me she had only just come from the eastern coast, made the trip round the Horn rather than the North-West Passage to these waters.

"It seems to me you people got along famously for such short acquaintances," Kane said railingly.

"Well, it was asking for you that proved the open sesame," Jimmy retorted. "We talked for a few minutes after we came aboard, then she sent me in. Said you were quite well enough now, so no surprise would hurt you."

For some minutes the two men talked on, Jimmy finally remarking: "When will the *Varangian* head for civilisation?"

Kane shook his head. Until hearing the question put, he had never given the matter thought since coming aboard. In fact, what with all the recent new sensations marking the time since he had reached these northern waters, particularly those of the last few days, he had entirely forgotten the outside world. "I don't much care when we return," he said, after a minute. "I don't know when I ever enjoyed myself as well as I'm doing right now."

Jimmy eyed him disapprovingly; remarked: "Well, ideas differ. Certainly what I've gone through recently hasn't endeared this particular part of the earth to me. Of course, you've had it different." He sighed. "It reminds me of that night at the club when we discussed romance. I told you then some people were born to casual ways. Don't you see how right I am? Now if I'd been in your shoes, the crack on the head would undoubtedly have killed me, and I'd have missed all this cosy comfort and tête-à-tête with Brünhild as companion, which you've been enjoying."

From outside there drifted in the varied noises of the Esquimaux and crew at work upon the body of the great mammifer alongside the ship, made fast fore and aft. With long-handled blubber spades, some six inches wide and razor sharp of blade, the Esquimaux were rapidly cut-

ting the blubber away in long thin strips around the body, and as each strip was separated, it was hoisted aboard and conveyed to the huge iron storage tanks filling the vessel hold to the level of the deck; for after the fashion of many whalers the *Varangian* did not render her takings.

The entrance of Elfrida prevented Jimmy from further remarks upon the question he had been discussing. Dropping into a chair she voiced good humouredly: "At this rate I'll soon have the whole of Devil Maclean's crew aboard." She went on to question Jimmy closely as to conditions aboard the *Ena*. When he had described the state of affairs she said with a faint touch of relief in her manner: "Well, I guess we don't need to worry any more about him bothering us. Of course, we hadn't any right to his boats; but still, as he already had enough for himself, he might have been reasonable and let us have the surplus. To keep the boats was a matter of necessity with us. It was a case of the greatest good to the greatest number," she said, addressing Kane more directly. "The greater my catch of whales, the more good I can do in the way of new homes for sailors." Then, abruptly changing the subject, she went on: "I'm having a little cabin abaft the mizzen fixed up for you two. I've been using it for storing gear. It'll be ready

for you to-night. And I have also decided that you are both to be accepted as passengers for the rest of the voyage. There is really nothing for you to do."

Kane was about to voice a protest when she, noting, forestalled him jokingly, "I've got you both down as first class passengers, and charged accordingly, though the rate is very moderate, I think—only twenty-five a week. I'm quite proud of myself for thinking up the idea. Instead of paying out wages to two very indifferent sailors, whom I have no work for, I have income-creating passengers."

Kane sensed behind the action her desire to save both himself and Jimmy from further unaccustomed and now unnecessary labour, and was duly grateful. And with the vista now of months of her continued companionship opening out before him till the outside world should again be reached, this dreary northern region seemed the brightest of spots.

"Besides," Elfrida went on, "I figure to get at least twenty-five dollars a week worth of entertainment out of each of you, so you see it's going to be a very profitable transaction for me." Again she addressed herself directly to Kane: "As I told you once before, I am very careful to do nothing to offend my crew. They're a funny lot, very much like children, and as they've nearly

all known me since I was so high, they all want to guard me like so many fathers. By making you paying passengers the whole thing is simplified, and puts our social intercourse on a satisfactory basis. Haugen, who understands English, heard all Mr. Shaler said about himself and you. So after Mr. Shaler had come in to see you, I told Haugen what action I had decided on."

"And what did he think of Jimmy's story of me being a millionaire and he my private secretary?" Kane asked, on noting a queer gleam lurking in her eyes.

She smiled. "He repeated to me a Norwegian phrase," she replied. "Translated into English it goes something like this: 'It is easy for even a beggar to claim a distant kingdom.'"

Kane and Jimmy laughed. Said Jimmy: "From which it is perfectly plain I failed to impress your genial giant."

"I think I reassured him," she replied. "You see"—this with a sly glance at Kane—"I overheard quite a few of this gentleman's remarks in his delirium which led me to suspect some such happening as you have just related, and I had already told Haugen of my conjectures, so now with you coming forward with corroborative tale, I think he half admits to himself that I may be right. But he never, never will admit it to me,

for he hates to have his judgment proved wrong. If you two will only turn out to be frauds, he'll be tickled to death, just for the opportunity it would give him of coming to me in fatherly way and saying: 'I told you so.' "

Late that afternoon Kane and Jimmy moved to their new quarters. The millionaire's strength was rapidly returning, and he was able to walk unaided all the way. Their cabin was very small, so tiny as to be merely a sleeping place. This the girl spoke of, remarking that as they were first class passengers they were entitled to the use of the saloon; in fact were to occupy it in their waking hours.

So the two representatives of another sphere of life, after long weeks of the hardships of the sea, came once more into a semblance of their former manner of living, even though removed by several thousand miles from that civilisation of which they were so much a part.

In the catching of whales in the region the *Varangian* now hunted in, very little use was made of the ship. It served chiefly as a supply base; the whole work of pursuing and capturing the leviathans being done by the boats. So far the *Varangian's* crew had been most fortunate, taking whales within easy towing distance of the ship. Following Jimmy's arrival this good fortune deserted them. A whole week passed in

which the boats caught never even a sign of a whale. At the expiration of this time the whale-boats were equipped for a wider ranging before made unnecessary.

To fit them for this work each boat was roofed over with stout canvas covers, supported on wooden hoops several feet high, half-a-dozen of the latter to each boat. Each boat also carried an oil stove for warmth and cooking. For sleeping arrangements wide boards were carried. These were spread across the intervals between the seats. Outfitted in such a manner the whale boats offered comfortable if somewhat cramped quarters. In case of storm they could be drawn ashore and propped up on the side, forming a snug shelter. In this way long trips, a week or more in duration, were possible. If a whale was killed within a reasonable distance it could be towed back to the ship. If too far out, the *Varangian* could up anchor and go to it, secure the bone and blubber and then return to the safe anchorage in the splendid harbour they had discovered. In case of killing a whale in a locality inconvenient or impossible for the ship to reach, yet so distant as to make towing impracticable, the boat crews would take only the bone.

With Haugen, Jennson, Anderson, Gunderson, and Ikloona, the latter cleverest of the Esquimaux, each in charge of a boat, the *Varangian's*

little flotilla drew away from the ship's side early on the morning of September eight. The weather had held remarkably fine; but the days were rapidly shortening, and the increasing sharpness in the air advised of the near approach of early coming winter. For this reason the crew was eager to accomplish the killing of at least half-a-dozen more whales: for this number, with those already taken, would fill the tanks to capacity, and a last minute race for the outside could be made.

Remaining on board beside Elfrida, Kane and Jimmy, were Morley Starns, the Norwegian cook, two Norwegian sailors, two Esquimaux men, twelve women and nine children all under fourteen. For the *Varangian*, when taking over the boats of Devil Maclean left with the Esquimaux, had been forced to load aboard the entire Esquimaux village, men, women, children, dogs and equipment. The Esquimaux does nothing by halves, and the opportunity to become a guest on a white man's ship is always eagerly seized, assuring as it does comfortable quarters, food in plenty, with such luxuries as tea, tobacco, and candies sometimes available.

Hardly had the boats disappeared when Elfrida, seated in the big cabin with her two passengers, broached a plan, suggested to her a

short time before by Jimmy's narration of Devil Maclean's caribou hunt.

"I have been thinking a caribou hunt would be a rattling good idea. We need fresh meat badly, and with any luck we might take enough to run us several weeks. Would you two like to go?"

Both men assented eagerly. Kane was now back to his old strength, and actually weary of inaction, after the strenuous days of the recent past.

So the following morning the 'dinghy made several trips to the shore, landing Elfrida, Kane, and Jimmy, two Esquimaux men, three of the strongest women, and eight dogs. The whites of the party and the two Esquimaux men carried rifles. The women and dogs were lightly loaded with camp equipment and a week's grub.

In case of successful hunt each of the dogs could be loaded with thirty pound packs on their backs, after the fashion of pack horses, a summer mode of travel the Esquimaux in recent times have learned from the white man, or so the white men claim. The women could each carry fifty pounds and the men seventy-five, or even greater loads, depending on the distance the game was killed from the *Varangian*.

All unknowing they were the object of secret surveillance, the little party struck inland.

As they dropped over the edge of the first rise

beginning some quarter mile back from the shore, Devil Maclean ensconced in a warm hiding place along the beach, put down his glasses with a grunt of satisfaction.

Seven days previously Maclean had returned to the *Ena* with some eight hundred pounds of caribou meat, resulting from the hunting party which Jimmy had deserted.

From the fresh meat and the leisure recently enjoyed, the *Ena's* crew in a week's time were in splendid trim; even Sandy Maclean had triumphed over his bullet pierced lung, and was well on his way to recovery. With this marked improvement in the men, new hope was born in the heart of the *Ena's* skipper. Conversant with every move in the game of whaling, a plan had slowly taken shape in his brain—the fulfilment of which necessitated the watching of the *Varangian*. So the *Ena* had sailed once more close to the other side of the long promontory that sheltered the deep cove where the *Varangian* lay, but had remained far enough away and close hugging the shore so as to be invisible to the Norwegian craft. Maclean had then rowed ashore, and farther down the beach, within a mile of the *Varangian*, had established a lookout post, where, by aid of his glasses, everything taking place aboard the *Varangian* was discernible.

For several days during every hour of daylight, either Maclean or one of the men had been on the lookout. With immense satisfaction Maclean had watched the departure of the flotilla of whaleboats. This was the move that he, through his knowledge of whaling, had anticipated would sooner or later occur. Still, aware of the possibility of the boats returning for some unexpected reason, or through the good fortune of quickly taking a whale in close proximity to the ship, he, to be safe, had delayed another day his contemplated action, and now while taking careful final survey at the *Varangian* and the water around her, he saw with immensely increased satisfaction the still further departure from the vessel's side.

With heart exulting he made his way back to the *Ena*. This viewing of fresh exodus from the *Varangian* had changed Maclean's plan completely. Immediately following his arrival on board, the *Ena* became a hive of activity. With the exception of Sandy Maclean and Cooper, still weak from pneumonia, the men were in the best physical condition since the beginning of the voyage. Their spirits had improved, what of recent eating of much good red meat and days of idling. So when Devil Maclean once more harangued them, as he had done previous to their last raid upon the rival whaler, his speech was

received with faint show of enthusiasm. The almost certainty of success by reason of the *Varangian's* depleted crew, and the possibilities of loot, Devil Maclean described most fully.

Elfrida and her little hunting party were perhaps some three hours inland when the *Ena* up anchored. Moving with shortened sail before a light breeze she bore out to sea sufficient to round the point of the harbour. Then the vessel turned once more landward, and quickly bore down upon the *Varangian*.

Seated on the *Varangian's* fo'castle head, one of the nine Esquimaux women remaining on board was first to sight the approaching ship. Her scream brought the two Norwegian sailors hurrying from out their cabin, where they had just begun a game of cards. Sensing the danger of the situation, they dived back for their rifles; returning to the deck crouched behind the rail on the fo'castle head. Not sure as yet of the intentions of the approaching ship, they held their fire.

Bow pointing some little distance behind the *Varangian's* stern, the *Ena* approached. When the vessel's nose had just passed the stern of the *Varangian*, the wheel was put hard over, and the *Ena* swept in alongside of the *Varangian*. But not until the last minute did any form show on the *Ena's* deck. Only the man at the wheel had

been a possible mark for the guns on the *Varangian*, and he an almost impossible one by reason of the method of the *Ena's* approach.

With faint grating the attacking schooner brushed the *Varangian's* side. Instantly the *Ena's* deck was alive with men. The vessel's rails differed scarce two feet in height, the Norwegian ship's overreaching.

Half of the *Ena's* crew, fully armed, leaped upon the other deck, while the rest, working with rapid hands, made fast the ships with grappling irons and ropes, and took in sail on the *Ena*.

Walsh, Windle and Sparks, leaping from the forward deck of the *Ena*, cleared the *Varangian's* rail with a running bound, coming down almost on top of the two Norwegian sailors, still crouching on the forecastle head, withholding their fire till the last minute now to make each bullet the more effective. Not ten feet apart were attackers and attacked. Sparks, through over-impetus and awkward landing, had fallen, sprawling full length. And yet almost as he dropped, and still lying so, with his just lost breath not half recovered, he opened fire with his automatic. But no quicker was he than the Norwegians, at last giving over their waiting. The rifle of the first spat leaden death to Windle as he struck the deck, and with a sputtering, strangling cough he fell, a gaping hole torn through his throat. Yet even as

the first Norwegian fired, his doom was sealed. Three bullets from Sparks' automatic struck him on the forehead, chest and chin, while the second Norwegian, with gun half raised to fire at the nearer Walsh, went down under the next two shots.

Filled with a strange triumph, Sparks got to his feet. For one brief moment he, spawn of an unbalanced civilisation, enervate and degenerate of the Barbary Coast, had leaped back across the centuries and become a blood-lusting killer, as primordial and wild as any stone age ancestor of the long, long ago. Aleap, athrill, aglow with battle madness he crossed to where the blood gushing corpses lay. Then that atavic something of the moment before—the seeing red of fight, a thing half fear half ferocity—left him cold and sick. That red blood gobbing out here on the deck was man blood! He had killed a fellow being! He, who but once before in all his years had raised his fist in fight, and that in the far distant past. Suddenly he felt faint and sick. His knees shook. Vertigo and trembling seized him. Turning half away his gaze fell upon the staring face of his companion Walsh, close beside him. With horror's fascination the other was gazing. Now conscious of Sparks' attention Walsh looked up, his face ghastly. "My God!" he articulated thickly, "My God, they're dead!"

But such is the strangeness of the human mind that Walsh's words and actions now made Sparks once more seeming brave. "Of course," he grunted, assuming a vast contempt, an infinite superiority. "Let's get on. We have more to fight."

Together they went cautiously aft. But the battle was ended. The cook had been done to death bravely defending his galley. Morley Starns, wise for all he had but half the portion of wits, had surrendered without a fight.

Then Maclean, true buccaneer at heart, as thieving of instinct as any of his cattle-stealing forefathers of the distant Scottish heaths, began his dearly planned looting. A double portion of grog was served all around, setting fire to the brains of men long robbed of stimulant.

For hours the men with ruthless hands rifled the ship from stem to stern. With arms heavy laden and backs bent underneath their loads they went to and fro from the *Varangian* to the *Ena*.

Nothing was overlooked. The entire supply of food, the books, the furnishings, everything that was moveable they carried away.

For three days more, idly waiting, the *Ena* swung alongside the *Varangian*, for now Maclean's plans of revenge had widened. During the three days a watch was kept every hour of the day and night from the "crowsnest" for the

returning whaleboats. The capture of these was now to be the final coup in Devil Maclean's so well succeeding revenge.

Early in the afternoon of the fourth day, the lookout's joyous call announced the appearance of the returning boats on the horizon line to the eastward.

A sharp wind was blowing, creating a choppy sea. Overhead a smoked-pearl sky warned of coming snow. The five boats' crew, weary, cramped and bitterly disappointed from their days of unsuccessful scouring of the sea, bent eagerly to the oars, hurrying shipwards with that same anxiety as a tired livery horse when his head turns toward the home barn. By reason of the long protruding arm of land forming the other side of the harbour, and a still longer one just beyond, the incoming boats moved on a line resembling one side of a triangle, at the base of which were the ships. Devil Maclean standing on the forecastle head of the *Varangian* studied the nearing flotilla with careful glass. It was none of Maclean's plan to allow them to come too close in, for in such event, when he made his attack some of the whaleboats might gain the shore and, once ensconced on the beach behind an upturned boat, make vigorous defence. But out upon the choppy and ever growing rougher

sea the crews were at the mercy of the rifle fire from the *Ena's* rail with no chance of retaliation.

When the whaleboats were still a good two miles away the *Ena* swung clear of her consort ship, and under shortened sail bore down upon the whaleboats. Straight into their midst she moved, her rail lined with riflemen, each one most emphatically instructed to shoot at only the white men of the crews; though firing from a reeling deck at equally swaying objects far below, such order had no assurance of exact fulfilment. Twenty rounds of fire belched from the *Ena's* deck as she came up with the boats, moving in close array. Then quick the schooner hove to. The rifle fire had done its work. Two of the Norwegians and eight of the Esquimaux lay in the bottom of the boats. In momentary panic the rest had ceased to man the oars. The boat tossed idly on the uneasy sea. Devil Maclean, desired proximity gained, addressed the boats' crews in his roaring voice, his words at once triumphant and propitiatory: "We've got yur ship and yur all at ower maircy. But we'll throw you a line if you are ready to surrender and act peaceable."

The first round of fire had taken as its toll Haugen, Jennson, Anderson; so Gunderson, now first in command, realising the uselessness of

further resistance, answered: "All right. We'll coom aboard."

Five of the crew, including Haugen and Jennson were dead, and the other three Esquimaux. Five more were badly wounded. These were first hoisted aboard, then one by one the remainder of the crew climbed up the *Ena's* ladder.

The Norwegians were placed under a guard forward. The Esquimaux, after a consultation between Maclean and Ikloona, were turned loose and accepted as part of the *Ena's* crew, for Ikloona and the rest of the village, former henchmen as they were of Maclean's, now that the tide of fortune had turned, were quick to renew the old alliance.

With the boats in tow the *Ena* made her way back and once more tied up to the *Varangian*. But with remembrance of that little party ashore, Maclean realised that he must seek new harbour, for situated as he now was, an armed man on the beach, could place the vessels in a state of siege. So, good as the present anchorage was, Maclean decided upon immediate departure for another spot some fifty miles down the coast with which he was familiar.

As the vessels' sides grated once more together, Devil Maclean divided his crew, half under the command of Sandy, taking charge of the *Varangian*. Immediately the *Ena* again got under

way. Sail was quickly broken out on the *Varangian*, and she moved out toward the open sea in the wake of her captor.

Some two miles inland, moving wearily coastward after a week's unsuccessful hunting, there came to the ears of Elfrida and the rest of the party the sound of rifle firing from out to sea sharply distinct by reason of a veering wind. All stopped short, stood with straining ears. But only the returning all-pervading hush, the quiet of a vast, profound calm, tomb-like, awesome in its intensity, greeted now their eager listening. North, south, east, west, the wilderness stretched away, faintly rolling, boulder-strewn, a dreary immensity in which nothing moved, a lonely waste where silence lay so heavy upon the air that the throbbing of the blood behind their ears now sounded as loudest drumming. Ahead of them the sky had taken on that peculiar appearance bespeaking a great body of water underlying; but through the configuration of the land they could not yet glimpse the sea though less than a half mile away.

Vaguely alarmed the party got in motion again. Elfrida with long, rapid strides took the lead; under the urge of apprehension she moved at ever faster pace, a slim, strong, young figure, bent ever so slightly forward from the waist,

and moving with the easy, swaying, loose-jointed motion of the knees, the walk best suited to untiring travelling.

Close at her heels came Kane, once more returned to Jovian strength, and a little in his rear the slower stepping Jimmy, while the Esquimaux straggled behind. Fully a hundred feet ahead of the others Elfrida and Kane made the top of the last rise giving view on the harbour.

There, putting out to sea, under a smoked-pearl sky, under the grey of the lowering autumn afternoon, moved the *Varangian*, all sails set, an ever lessening bulk in the gathering dusk of the dying day. On she went, her white sails the one bright spot in all the grim arctic landscape. The wind had risen higher. The sea was a tossing, heaving world of slate pencilled with lines of foaming white caps. The vessel dipped and rose, dipped and rose, to the lengthening swells as though bidding fond curtsy and last adieu to her mistress, to her long-loved commander standing there on the barren eminence, dry-eyed, her throat hurting with a choking pain. To the watching girl it was as though a part of her life, a part of her very self was drifting away across those rolling waters, a dear companion, dependable, staunch, brave, was moving out into the night, into the gloom of unknown seas, slipping away across the waters under a hostile,

guiding hand, regretful, yet going on, leaving her forever.

The schooner grew smaller, hung on the horizon rim a vague, tossing shape. Then catching the fuller drive of the wind of the open sea she rushed on faster. Her hull dropped from sight. Her clean, new, bright canvas, still faint in the distance, flashed a long moment like the flag of a signalling soldier—then this too was gone. The *Varangian* was lost to sight.

But still the girl stared on out at the spume splashed horizon, as though by very force of will to call back the vanished ship. There in its after-cabin she had first seen the light of day; its decks had been her childhood playground, her home through the growing years; there in the big cabin she had read and dreamed and written out her thoughts on life; upon it she had sailed the endless ocean and learned to live the clean, strong life of the open sea.

Gripped by a sense of this moment's hanging tragedy for Elfrida; realising that her emotion was more terrible, more poignant by far than even that oppressing them through comprehension of the perilousness of their present situation, Kane and Jimmy stood silent, their eyes alternately upon the girl and the ocean beyond. Even the Esquimaux remained tense, motionless, without sound, awed by an unknown something

emanating from the strange white woman standing there so still, so rigid, staring out upon the infinity of tossing water.

Then, as the last of the ship showed, the storm of her pent passions broke. Berserk fury seized her. The immediate world receded and was gone, blotting out Kane and all those around her. She raised clenched fists high to that distant horizon, while Norwegian curses, strange, as terrible and wild as any uttered by Vikings of old, poured from snarling, twitching lips. Gone was her civilisation. Slim and lithe and young, a wrothy being of tenth-century mould now she stood, foretelling vengeance and disaster upon her despoilers. Kindred was she to Hengist and Horsa, and the heroes of Magnussaga, freebooters, carvers of frontiers, epic figures, dauntless, brave and passioned strongly. Their same fury, tawny and untamed, now filled her and made her for a moment a mad thing of emotions primitive.

As a great gust in passing shakes a pine, so was her anger, violently swaying, stirring to the very roots of her being. Then it was gone. Her hands dropped, the fists unclenched. She stood very quiet, breasts heaving. Still dazed by the reaction she looked upon those about her. Into her eyes came a wondering look, tremulous, questioning as that of waking child. Seeing her painful return to earth, Jimmy, with attempted air of

jauntiness, broke the silence: "I guess we stay at this hotel to-night. I choose the room with the best ocean view."

But no one could rouse to equal cheery frame of mind. In silence they set about making camp. The precious contents of the oil-bag which had supplied the Esquimaux cooking lamp they had carried had been finished that morning. Too, in the certainty of making the ship for the evening meal, what little food they had had left that morning had been fed to the dogs. It began to snow, hard; big flakes, thick, an opaque mantle whirling in the wind like the garment of an unquiet ghost.

Glumly they sought out the most sheltered spot in the lee of the rise. Seated, with blankets around them, they held a council.

But the outlook was so desperate that for the time being all were voiceless. No theory, no suggestion, no idea as to a way out projected itself. Marooned here in strange land, foodless, fireless, with winter at their elbow, the storm sounding in their ears, the sinisterness of the situation took on doubly fearful aspect, robbing them of initiative, of the calmness and peace of mind that makes for careful contemplation. The vastness and desolateness of this treeless waste stretching about them, was all in a moment potential with horror. Now they stood without protecting ship

which had been at once a shelter and a carrier. So, presently, no definite plan being advanced, they rolled in their sleeping bags for the night.

Though possessed of neither food nor fuel in a woodless land, there were still many things in their favour. It was only the sixteenth day of September; and though cold weather, storm and snow were to be expected, the time for the coming of the winter darkness of the region was still a good fifty days away. In this time much ground could be covered in an endeavour to reach some settlement along the coast. All the party were warmly clad; for, for many weeks previously the Esquimaux women on board the *Varangian* had been sewing industriously upon winter suits of skin and fur. One of these suits Elfrida, Kane and Jimmy had donned before starting on the present hunting trip. Their arctic boots—the uppers made of heavy-haired hide of the winter skin of the caribou, the stout soles of ouj oug leather, or bearded seal—were all new, and fit for a fairly long trip. Each one was equipped with sleeping bag of caribou, very light, weighing less than seven pounds apiece, than which is no greater protection against the cold. In addition to this the whites each had one blanket, really unnecessary, and not used by the Esquimaux. They had two hundred rounds of ammunition and four rifles, two .30-30; and two

.303. So if game could be found, the outlook was not so terrible. If game did not show there were still the dogs, eight in number, and fat from much whale meat and lazy living aboard ship. So meat the party still had, raw it must be eaten now, but still it was food, if nothing else should present itself—food nauseous to contemplate, but life preserving and continuing.

All these things occurred to the party on waking next morning. The day broke clear and fine. The snow had stopped late in the night, leaving the ground covered with an inch deep mantle. With the calm had come cold. But in the now windless atmosphere the keen bite of the air was exhilarating. Though without thermometer they judged it to be below zero.

In the light of a new day the situation seemed less appalling. Chikchigalook, a boy of about eighteen, the most intelligent of the Esquimaux, spoke English fluently, having been raised close to the Mounted Police post of Herschel Island. As the country was entirely strange to all the whites, it was he who now outlined a plan of action.

According to his calculation, Herschel Island, the only settlement possible of reaching, lay about two hundred and seventy miles down the coast. By the time they would reach a point on the mainland near it the ice would have formed

sufficiently to make crossing possible. By reason of the deeply indented shore line of Mackenzie Bay much mileage could be saved by leaving the land as soon as the ice was solid enough, and striking across the mouth of the bay toward Herschel beyond. This, Chikchigalook believed would save perhaps seventy miles of travelling. He had been over the country farther to the west and was fairly familiar with it. There was also the possibility too of coming across Esquimaux camps.

Thus, though breakfastless, they started out on their long hike. Hunger gnawed, but not as yet with sufficient strength to make palatable husky dog meat served raw. So they moved on, spread out in long line over perhaps a mile and a half of country in hopes of sighting an arctic hare.

CHAPTER NINE

The Yea-to-Be

CIVILISATION is but a veneer, and of the thinnest quality. A word, a blow, a change of environment, and man leaps back across the ages to become a primal thing, barbarous and rude of practice. Hunger, fiercest and strongest of all man's needs, quickly makes kin the most fastidious esthete and the crudest savage.

Thus it was that Jimmy Shaler, late dramatic editor of the *San Francisco Call*, and a member of the Argonaut Club, sat down to a meal of raw dog in company with Chikchigalook, Esquimaux and creature of primitive ways, on the second evening of their tramp. And, too, partaking of the food with a gusto only starvation could have created, Kane, master of millions and figure in the Golden Gate City's best society, ate side by side with Polniak, the other Esquimaux man of the party, a grizzled veteran of the wastes, all of fifty years of age; while Elfrida, clutched and swallowed her portion of the unsavoury feast with as much avidity as Oanaleena, Ikuana, and Navalook, the women of the party to whom strong and even rancid meat was a delicacy.

Travelling in cold weather on an empty stomach is the most enervating of work. Yet, driven by fear, impelled by hope of securing game, a fast pace had marked the first two days of their foodless journey. With the coming of night of the second, however, everyone was utterly exhausted. Their craving stomachs were eager for anything.

No living thing had they encountered, so Chikchigalook, with shot from his rifle had despatched the smallest of the dogs, and then, aided by the other men driven off with brandished rifles the others who at their companion's fall had leaped eagerly forward to devour the still kicking carcass.

The dogs' eagerness to feed upon their comrade was a surprise to Kane, for he had read somewhere that dogs will not eat dog meat. On expressing this to Elfrida she said: "Yes; I believe numerous travellers have stated this, but it is not true," a statement which Chikchigalook bore out.

Still, though by necessity brought to this primitive pass, Elfrida, Kane and Jimmy ate sparingly, realising the possible effect of gorging stomachs too long empty, and, further not attuned to such strong fare. They also exercised restraint upon their companions, by nature

and environment more inclined to eating to excess when the opportunity offered.

Following the meal the party were in the best spirits since their marooning. After nine days of outdoor life, both white men were reverting to savage shagginess of hair and beard. Sprawled here on the arctic tundra, each was suitably savage to fit the savage setting of this hostile waste.

But though civilised man reverts quickly and easily to simpler state of living through hunger and privation, his mind is subject to no such rapid metamorphosis. Thus it was, that cuddled in their sleeping bags here on the snow, the whites fell to discussing philosophy, art and literature. And presently as they talked there came to Kane for the first time thought of Elfrida's book, now forever lost to her. But a few hours before their leaving on the hunting trip, she had told him of having nearly finished its final revision and promised it should be his on their return. The realisation of their loss brought a pain and a sadness as sharp as if it had been something personal.

Under the impulse caused by his emotion he interrupted an argument Jimmy and Elfrida were engaged upon. "Your book; I just remembered it——" He stopped, the sentence left unfinished at sight of her face. To Elfrida, so gay the in-

stant before, there came rushing back all the pain, the raging anger, the despair that had been hers two days before when standing on the rocky eminence watching the *Varangian* put out to sea. And seeing, Kane cursed himself for his thoughtless, impulsive words.

But after a minute, composed, she said with attempted cheerfulness: "After all, it doesn't matter—nothing really matters very much." And hearing, Kane realised that despite her struggle against it, some of that early pessimism, born of her youthful reading and her strange environment, still returned at times and laid strong hands upon her; in spite of all her resolve to attend to and be interested only in the actualities of life, there came at times an ever recurring wonder at life, a philosophic curiosity of its "What? Why? Whence? and Whither?" At times her mind refused to obey the helm of will; and, like all people who think, she was preoccupied with the Unknowable; dwelt ponderingly upon the unsolvable mystery of destiny. Its "Everlasting No" had for her a deadly fascination, which no formed philosophy, and determined interest in the material could ever fully conquer.

A momentary silence followed her words. Then Jimmy, cynic, disillusioned of life by years of newspaper work, and true to his philosophy of mankind moving helpless in the hands of an in-

exorable destiny, agreed: "No; nothing really matters." The reporter had looked long on life in the real and the raw, had been scarred in the seeing, yet without this now breeding bitterness. Instead, with the completion of his philosophy, had come a calm acceptance of things as they were handed out. His full awareness that in the scheme of things the majority of mankind was discriminated against, had at first brought bitterness, and a fierce desire to revolutionize all existing injustices. The first three years of reporting had cured him of this; had completed his philosophy. He was not unkind; was charitable and generous to an extreme degree, giving willingly of his money or time to aid some needy one, but taking no credit, believing as he did that no man was responsible for his actions, good or bad. But with him each act was personal. He dealt directly with the individual and his or her particular misery. But over that larger misery of mankind, the oppression, injustices, and wrongs, done to the masses—while he was in a position to be more fully aware of it than the average man, and keenly affected by it sometimes to cause deepest depression—he refused to be permanently sad, realizing as he did fully the impossibility of his alleviating in their entirety conditions as old as the race."

"Well, Jimmy," Kane, remarked after a mo-

ment, "until recently I never gave life a thought, but, despite the undeniable fact that, as you say, nothing really matters very much, we all of us keep hanging on to our mortal coils. Why, even poor suckers, like we saw on the Barbary Coast, keep living, though, God knows, after what I saw that night and since, I can't see their reason. So, though striving for something may make life a little more worth while, I think it's pretty plain that a good many of us hang on without any goal in sight—those bums, for instance, and——" he hesitated a moment, as if for better effect, "myself."

By now Jimmy's eyes were fixed upon the speaker with fascinated stare. Could this be Wild Bill Kane speaking! Kane the thoughtless, reckless chaser of enjoyment, lover of women and wine and pleasures abandoned; Kane, the bored master of millions, but a few weeks before moaning in his club for some new time-killing enjoyment; could this be Kane, the hitherto living embodiment of Pan and Bacchus, the eternal spirit of youth, lusty, unthinking, wild, free and uncaring; could this be he speaking, who, in all the years of his acquaintance, Jimmy had never once heard voice one philosophical or really serious thought?

But Kane was again speaking, causing the

reporter to desist reflecting in order to follow the conversation.

The millionaire went on almost vehemently, as though thoughts, gathering and dammed up these many days, had broken loose the floodgates of speech.

"Just a little before you came aboard the *Varangian*, Jimmy, Captain Freeda, here"—half in banter, half in respectful earnest, Kane had fallen into addressing her thus—"opened my eyes; showed me what a perfectly useless specimen I was. I'd already lived and seen a few things previous to meeting her after leaving 'Frisco and had started to do some thinking for myself, so I could heartily agree with her. She showed me I needed a philosophy of life. For the first time I realised that the world was all wrong, unfair to the many, overgood to the few; and yet, at the same time, I can't help seeing that there exists a certain essential fitness of things—each man to his place and work, without which I really don't know where civilisation would be. We have farmers, fishermen, financiers, and—fools with money, and paupers and work slaves and a thousand other wretched individuals. It is this inconsistency, this right working of things that are yet wrong, which makes acquiring a working philosophy most difficult for me."

He paused; and before he could go on, Jimmy

said: "There's always been masters and men—inequality. It's part of this ill-balanced world. The strong prey upon the weak, and grow stronger from the preying, while the weak grow ever weaker. It's been that way since earliest recorded times. Thus to-day we have class and race hatred, strikes and wars, riches and poverty. But no one is to blame. Each man has a destiny, a fate inexorable, impossible of escaping, impossible of changing."

"I've thought of that theory, too," Kane admitted, "but I've put it away. I like to think man is captain of his own ship. And, going on this premise, what interests me now is, is there a possibility of doing away with present unjust conditions? It seems to me that all this existing misery and injustice, of which those Barbary Coast stiffs and Maclean's sailors are a small example, lies at the door of man—I don't think Fate is responsible. The race of man as a whole has never striven to reach a state of living that would do away with all this existing muddle; and it is now my opinion that hunger and poverty are not necessary, even granting to its fullest extent the effect of men's inequality."

"I think so too," Elfrida agreed. Then, her voice tinged with the pessimism of the moment before, "but there is so much against a world state where everyone will have enough in a world

that is rich so that there *is* more than enough for all—so much against it, selfishness, hatred of class and creed, atavic tendencies all, resultant from environment. But the greatest of all is selfishness. And the sad part is that among the strong, the master breed, selfishness so predominates as to help on Nature's inherent savagery, instead of their banding together to curb it. If the master breed would only think unselfishly. But never yet has this been so. For instance, you give twenty men an equal start in life, say at the age of even sixteen, perhaps one, perhaps five will gain to positions of power, and even each of these to varying degree. The rest?—Well, everyone will find an unimportant, perhaps miserable place in the scheme of things. And the successful ones will say, 'Well, whose fault was it?' of the others. It's human nature to accept things as they are, when those human beings are enjoying life. Mighty few of the successful kind give a damn about the unlucky ones, so there's a hell of a lot of people need looking after, with only a handful of people on the job. And it's just as I pointed out to you once before—circumstances, nature, civilisation's environment, have created a huge class of men that just have to be looked after."

"I guess maybe you're right," Kane admitted, his manner that of a humble pupil deferring to a great master. Then, his manner changing to that

of a person suddenly making decision on a matter long considered, he went on: "Freedra, I'm going to follow your lead; when I get back to civilisation I'm going to start using my money to help a whole lot of people help themselves." He paused, eyeing her eagerly a moment: "Will you be my advising partner in the work for awhile?"

"Yes," she said. And though she said but this one word in manner quiet, something in the expression of it and the light he saw in her eyes sent a strange thrill to the man's heart. And it was typical of both of them that no thought of their not eventually reaching civilisation ever occurred. Marooned here in a hostile land, without knowledge of any man's abode; with revolting raw meat, hardly fit for food, their only sustenance; fireless, facing unknown miles of travel on foot over a land God-forgot—all these things were a part of their awareness, and yet, with a magnificent certitude, an unquestioning belief in success, each accepted the reaching of San Francisco as a matter already settled.

Closely crawled together, the Esquimaux were already long asleep, and now, the conversation having reached the conclusion of the subject the whites ended their talk. Silence fell. Presently they slept.

Popular conception of the Canadian arctic region's winter is of a land continually subject to

extreme, unvarying cold. Nothing could be more fallacious. Like every other portion of the hemisphere this region is subject to changing weather. And, while long spells of very low temperature are common, mild ones also frequently occur. As in any other locality no two seasons are exactly alike.

During the night the temperature rose. When the party awoke it was thawing. This, of all weather, was the least desired, promising as it did before many hours' travel, wet feet for everybody. Without fire to dry their footgear, there was added to this discomfort danger of frost bite, for with nightfall came always a sharp drop in temperature.

Following supper the previous evening, Chik-chigalook had cut off the best portions of meat sufficient to supply everyone for three meals of the next day, and had portioned it out, throwing the balance to the seven starving huskies.

With breakfast of raw flesh once more forced down by famine's demand, the day's march started under a cheery sun.

Hunger's twin demon, thirst, now made itself acutely felt. All around lay snow; but snow, unless melted to liquid by fire or sun, acts much after the fashion of salt water; the fine particles when taken into the mouth offered only temporary relief to thirst, and, in the end, but served to increase it.

And now as they walked, Elfrida, Kane and Jimmy felt nausea stirring. The civilised state has its drawbacks; the higher the civilisation, the more sensitive and exacting the tastes relating to food. Though under the urge of fiercest hunger the whites had forced down the raw dog flesh, their nervous systems were such that this unfamiliar food caused a reaction, a nutritional disturbance which, before they had walked an hour on this third day of the hike, brought on splitting headaches and painful heartburn.

According to certain globetrotters the natives of some districts in China raise for the market dogs fattened solely on rice. These animals it is stated on the best authority make most excellent eating. While the so fed Oriental canines may be delicious, the fact remains that their doggy brothers of the arctic, the tough-sinewed, at times cannibal husky, feeding on anything from rancid meat to flour sacking, harness, or almost any object of metal, is not a beast possessing flesh of a palatable nature. Even the Esquimaux, accustomed all their lives to coarsest diet, often living on a straight meat diet for months at a time, now suffered inward disturbances. Not, however, that their stomachs revolted to the ordinary dog fare of the past few meals, but because they had indulged themselves upon the liver, in some animals an exceeding delicacy. Whether the particular

animal was diseased, or that husky liver in general contains something injurious, remained with the whites a matter of conjecture. At any rate, by noon the bodies of the entire five Esquimaux were covered with a fiercely burning rash.

Three hours later their walk became slower and they expressed disinclination to go on. In answer to Elfrida's questioning, Chikchigalook explained that they were all on fire all over, and their heads going around in circles. She noted also how bloodshot were their eyes. So, with the sun still a full two hours high, the party came to a halt upon the bare, faintly rolling tundra. Taking advantage of the warmth, they removed their soaking footgear, squeezed their socks and laid them on a clear patch of ground. While these dried, they donned their boots again and picked on bare open stretches crisp brown grass for fresh lining for their skin boots, the grass being one of the best arctic preventives against frost bite, the blades absorbing the perspiration or any moisture forming in the boot.

With the arrival of late afternoon, the warmth had created many little pools of water in hollow places. In search of these the party went ranging in every direction, and for the first time thoroughly slaked their thirst.

With the going of the sun, perhaps from the effect of the water, the party all felt better and

made the second meal of the day, consuming the meat remaining. Indeed, Kane noted that, Oanaleena afterwards, the youngest of the Esquimaux women, was casting covetous eyes on one of the seven remaining huskies. These animals, after tagging all day a little behind, now sat on their haunches in a semicircle a short distance from where the party were. True to their wolfish natures they remained aloof, for theirs was no love of man's caress; none of this grim grey band had ever thrilled to fondling at the hand of human creature, or rubbed cold nose appreciatively against an outheld palm, while wagging tail of pleasure at the attention. They only had served man because such was their training, begun in earliest puppyhood. Then, rigged in tiny harness, they had been pegged out upon the tundra, the end of their trace fastened to a tightly driven stake. Thus had come the first understanding of the law of the trace—to pull and pull eternally. And biting whiplash upon their hides had taught the pain that lay in tearing at that binding, holding cord. Thus had come respect for the harness, compelling them to servitude through fear and a power greater than themselves; for theirs was the law of snarl and fang, the right of might; theirs the knowledge that to him of the strongest teeth, the most slashing bite, came victory and a full belly. And above all creatures, man, in the shape

of cleverly whip-wielding Esquimaux had stood the strongest individual in their philosophy. The long lash of his short-handled whip, that pain stick most terrible, brought obedience. Too, from him came food. All their lives they had received it from his hand. So now, though the call to the service in the trace had ended many weeks before, they still clung to the heels of their masters, in vague, dumb way expecting sustenance as before.

With the meal finished, it suddenly occurred to Elfrida that the following day's meat supply would gain much in palatableness by being killed now, the eight or ten following hours ensuing before they would again eat permitting the animal heat to pass away. This animal heat had still been in the first eaten meat, and to this she now attributed their sickness.

Acting upon her suggestion Kane, with a well-placed shot to the head brought down the fattest of the dogs, and then assisted by the other two men he rescued the kicking corpse from its kicking companions about to tear their late comrade to bits. And hungry though the brutes were, the fear of man, ever a harsh-handed master since the days of their puppyhood, kept them from showing fight.

As before, after portioning out sufficient to last them the next day, Chikchigalook threw the balance to the waiting huskies. "I suppose," Jimmy

remarked in his old dryly humorous manner, as he tucked away safely his portion, "by the time I get back to 'Frisco I'll be so used to this raw dog diet that I'll be insisting on the Club keeping portions on hand so I can be served at least once a week."

The reporter's good spirits seemed infectious, and presently the Esquimaux offered as entertainment one of their folk songs, a monotonous droning, dreary repetition of three notes in minor key, "Aaa yaa yaa yee yaa ya aaa."

When they had finished Chikchigalook took up the burden of entertainment at Elfrida's suggestion. She said: "You have told me so many interesting stories, Chikchigalook, tell them again as my friends have never heard them." Then, addressing Kane and Jimmy, Elfrida explained: "Chikchigalook knows English so well that after I took the village people on board I had a lot of talks with him. It was such a splendid chance to gather in perfect form strange folk-tales that I made note of quite a few of them. I had intended to go on with the work, then Maclean's raid and your coming aboard and work on my book put it off." Then, to Chikchigalook: "Tell us that one about how the sea animals came to be."

Chikchigalook began: "Long time ago there was nice Esquimaux girl. She was preetiest girl in whole countree. She live with her father on

the shore of Coronation Gulf. One day the Raven see her, and come and make love to her. But her father said no, and tol' the Raven go way. Then the Raven change his shape to nice young man, and one day when the father is away from the village, the Raven come in his boat and he and this Esquimaux girl get in and start out for the home of the Raven which was on island out far in the sea. But the father come back to the village pretty quick after they go way. And he no see his daughter and he say to some of the other people: 'Where is my daughter, Nuliayok, gone?' And the people tell him about how young man come and take her away. And her father was very mad. His name was Anautclik. Anautclik get out his boat and he start after them. He had a lighter boat and pretty soon he catch up to them, and the Raven was a big coward and changed back into his own shape and flew away. Then Anautclik take Nuliayok in his boat and start back to the village. But the Raven was a god and he made beeg storm. And Anautclik's boat was little one and to save himself he throw his daughter out, for the boat not hold two peoples in a beeg storm. But Nuliayok grab the side of the boat and hang on. Her father very much scared. He afraid going to drown. So he take out his big hunting knife and he make slash at her hands. The knife cut off the fingers at the first knuckle.

They dropped into the water and turn into *natchuk*, the animal the white people call hair seal. But Nuliyok she still hang on, and her father he cut again, and this time take off the fingers to the second knuckle. And they dropped into the sea and turn to *ouj joug*, the animal the white peoples call the ground seal. But Nuliyok not want to die and she still hang on to the boat. Then her father cut again and take the rest of the finger. The pieces drop in to the water and turn to *ivik*, the animal you call the whale. Then Nuliyok could not hold on more and she sank to the bottom of the sea and became god of all the things in the water. And all the souls of animals which men kill go to her and live in lovely place at the bottom. So when Esquimaux kill sea animals he always put a little part of the animal back in the sea so it can go to Nuliyok. If not then bad luck come."

"Now tell the other one about Nuliyok and how all the different people came to be on the earth," Elfrida requested, as Chikchigalook did not offer to go on.

Human nature is very much the same all the world over in certain respects: given an appreciative audience, the storyteller waxes prolix and puts forth his best. And Chikchigalook, thus encouraged, proceeded:

"Another time when Nuliyok was living with

her father a beautiful dog fell in love with her. But her father was mad. So he take Nuliayok away and put her on little island to starve till she would promise not to have the dog for lover any more. But the dog was fine swimmer, and every night he swim to this island and bring Nuliayok things to eat. But one day the father catch the dog and kill him. Right after that Nuliayok have family, a lot of lovely little puppies. But Nuliayok was scared her father come and kill them. So she take half the puppies that was red in colour and put them in one of her boots and set them on the sea an' they drifted away. And she put the other puppies that was black in the other shoe and they sailed away. That is how the different coloured people come to be."

They sat for some time in silence after Chik-chigalook had completed his last story. The night was star-filled, and the Northern Lights were ribboning across the vaulted dome of the arctic sky, unfurling flags of shimmering sheen, faintly rustling like the brushing and softest crushing of sheets of finest silk.

And there in the grim arctic night, under the slashing stars, lost in the snow and the silence, with death almost at their elbow, Elfrida next took up the work of making all forget how terrible was their predicament. She told them tales taken from old Norse legend, ancient Eddas, stories

first uttered in the long dim past by wandering Valas, the soothsayers and prophetesses of the time, wandering from place to place, staff in hand, dressed in dark and strange habiliments, the copes and chasubles of their calling, a hood of black lambskin on their heads, a necklace of beads about their necks, and around their waists a girdle of agaric, hanging from which a black bag heavy-loaded with all the apparatus of conjury. Wondrous stories theirs, the world's first literature, primitive and rude, yet rhythmical and grand, having the magnificence of a great simplicity.

And, her voice so low, fitting the hanging hush of these endless listening distances, Elfrida told a selected few from memory rich from reading deeply in the folk-lore of her people. She told of the world's creation out of chaos; of Motsognir and Durin, greatest and second of the dwarfs; of Odin, Hœnir and Lodur, mighty spirits; and of Hraesvelg, the Jotun in eagle's form, who sits at the end of heaven, and by the flapping of his wings causes all the winds of earth.

Listening to her soft-voiced telling of stories ages old, Jimmy and Kane forgot the crepuscular night widened far around them across limitless wastes, and ceased for the time their watching of the play of the Northern Lights on their skating rink of sky; were carried back through the cen-

turies to become once more one with ancient thanes, and thrilled to the tales that thanes and thralls had thrilled to in times ten centuries past.

"I suppose a good deal of the folk-lore and literature of the ancient northern peoples has been preserved, and is to-day in print," Jimmy remarked when she had finished, adding: "There is so tremendously much printed a person can only know a very little of it. Everybody is specialising. With me it has been French literature and tales of travel."

"Yes; there is a good deal of it, but the amount lost is almost unbelievable, if one is to believe the theories advanced by men who have made this branch of literature their life study. But even what remains is enough to keep one reading for several years.

"And what is published of the northland peoples is but a small part of the literature of the race of man," Jimmy went on after a second, in musing tone, his mind following up train of thought suddenly started. "And yet now we of the twentieth century produce more new words in a day than all the ancients of a single century put together, even more than that, I suppose."

In the silence that followed, his mind and Elfrida's too, catching the trend of his thought, flew to the outside world and dwelt upon the same scenes: Out there, each passing day, from ten

thousand ever unquiet presses millions of daily papers were pouring; while from others gushed forth a stream of local weeklies; and in a hundred cities five thousand other roaring machines vomited their quota of magazines in hebdomadal, monthly and quarterly periods; while vying almost in numbers with the magazines came an ever increasing host of books, rushed forth from hundreds of great publishing houses, tremendous geysers spouting forth streams of volumes in vari-tinted covers and containing things foolish, philosophic and salacious; stories gay, sad, and sordid, useful, and meretricious, but a stream never ceasing, rather, increasing with such rapidity and variety of theme as fairly to stagger even these children of such a wondrous age, now that they stopped to give the matter consideration.

Suddenly appalled by the realisation of modern man's prolificacy, Elfrida came back to thought of her own book, written so toilsomely with hours of body-racking thought, created out of the warp and the woof of her being, the unburdenings of a deeply philosophic soul after long contemplation. And now, mingling with the painful regret of its loss, came musing: Of what matter was her work, or any particular one, or a dozen volumes, in such a torrent? Why bother to write when so many men before her and so many men now were

giving of their best to this stream of volumes that was filling the world to a vast overflowing?

How like an immensely wide, deep and far spreading river was the literary stream, she thought. Rising in the dim past when man at last, after countless eons, had left his arboreal scamperings to walk erect upon the earth and become a thinking thing, delving, pondering over present, past and future—rising in the dim past, the faintest little trickle, literature had begun its onward flow. Through the ages, surviving, it had ever come, moving and increasing with the budding human race. At first but thinnest dribble, then strengthening to a rivulet, then a tiny purling brook, turning into a brawling water course, literature had poured on, enlarging to a widening stream of ever increasing power, till now it flowed a mighty, irresistible and inexhaustible torrent, wide as the world, penetrating every nook and corner of the globe, demanding for its sustaining the labours of tens of thousands, causing human envy, heart burnings and pain, making voluntary, eager slaves of great men and prostitutes of little ones. Ah, yes; literature and the race of man moving together like twin rivers through the centuries, the volume of each growing, ever growing; and in every age, like mile boards on broad highway, were outstanding works of genius, all great according to their time;

but on no basis whatsoever was comparison possible between the masterpieces of one age and another.

She saw that though much that was empty, banal and even bad, floated upon the broad bosom of literature, only the good in the end survived—the worth while books, filled with the precious thoughts, born of the life blood, the sweat and toil of great and sincere men—and only these. The rest, the light, the trashy and salacious, like dregs feculent and foul sank and were forgotten, even by the generation which produced them. But always the good prevailed, lived on. It had been always thus, she realised.

But in another moment these thoughts were banished before the inrush of more personal ones pertaining to her own book. “Yes; yes,” she repeated to herself. “It is worth while to write. I shall start again, and my book will be better, far more worth while for this testing.”

At her words, the grim demon of pessimism, “What’s the use?” which had dogged her footsteps since the earliest days of her strangely ill-balanced childhood, once more retreated, baffled and defeated before her realisation of the value of the struggle in life.

The night was growing, so they talked no more. After the usual shifting and twisting about in their sleeping bags to find the most com-

fortable position upon a surface uneven and none too soft, which movements were each night preliminary to rest, the three whites fell asleep.

Eight o'clock the next morning found them on the trail, for the dawn was every day becoming later in breaking, cutting down the hours of march. They had walked perhaps an hour when Oanaleena, suddenly struck by a sense of something missing, stopped abruptly. With keen eyes she searched the ground behind, then let her gaze rove all over the landscape. The rest of the party, walking in loose order, but fairly near to each other, halted wonderingly, began following her gaze without as yet comprehending its meaning. Then into every mind, almost together, as if by telepathy connected, the same thought came, "The dogs."

The dogs no longer followed. They were gone; had been swallowed up in the grim immensity of the far stretching arctic waste. For a brief moment uncomprehending wonder at this filled the minds of the whites. Then understanding came. "Well, now who'd have thought it!" Jimmy gasped admiringly, for all the situation was grave. "The dear dumb brutes didn't take long to find out that following us was a game of 'Heads we lose, tails they win.'"

Fast upon the heels of the discovery came the sobering reflection that starvation, grim, des-

perate, terrible, faced them with frightening closeness.

"Maybe they coom back by and by," Chikchigalook offered encouragingly, but his voice was heavy with dolour.

Again the party spread out over the country. Ranging over a two mile wide stretch of territory, extending from the sea inland, they moved, every eye eagerly strained for sight of arctic hare or any sign of bigger game. But they seemed to move in a dead world. No living thing stirred. With the arrival of night a gloomy silence fell. Even Jimmy, usually buoyant, carefree in face of all past troubles, found no cheering word.

Following the exceeding warmth of the preceding day, the temperature had dropped sharply. With the arrival of evening the cold was intense, the coldest they had experienced. Throughout the day, hoping against hope, all hands had kept a sharp lookout for the return of the dogs, but without reward. Into the mysterious unknown of these arctic wilds the animals had gone in answer to some impulse, strange and subtle, born of their comrades' killing. All the days of their lives they had served the will of man; yet they were of the wild. The blood of ten thousand wolfish ancestors still was theirs. And with it wolfish instincts and quick suspicions that had caused their wary action, overruling all the influ-

ences consequent of their long vassalage to the race of man.

Faced with so unexpected a food shortage, the whites now realised how criminally wasteful had been their former distribution of the animals previously killed. Still, under the then existing circumstances, it had been seemingly a quite natural form of procedure. Certainly no one could be blamed for the huskies' departure. But now the day's rations, with which they had started out, was redivided to last for three. Doubtful of the Esquimaux' ability to restrain themselves, the whites took upon themselves to carry all but the next two meals' supply. The wisdom of this was early shown, for when the nightly camp was made, and the whites began supper, only Chik-chigalook and Polniak of the Esquimaux had food, the women having swallowed their share on the march. But wise as had been the action of Elfrida, Kane and Jimmy became conscious that a change had come over all the Esquimaux. An air of suspicion lurked in their manner. With starvation still a little distant, there already had come to these primitive people thought of self, and doubt of their white companions who had so promptly seized the greater portion of the food supply.

Elfrida, for whom the Esquimaux had expressed the strongest liking, did her best to allay

the fear she sensed was in their minds. At some length she explained to Chikchigalook the necessity of conserving the food, using for example the fact how already the three women had eaten their rations ahead of time. But hunger dulls the edge of reason, and Esquimaux, regardless of age, are essentially children, with childish thoughtlessness and fear.

With the break of day the march was resumed across the faintly rolling tundra, snow covered and boulder dotted. Before starting out Elfrida portioned out the meat for the day, all of which to her disgust and in spite of previous warnings, every one of the Esquimaux swallowed for their breakfast.

In answer to her scoldings Chikchigalook only grunted, afterwards conversing volubly with the others.

The onward journeying now became a silent affair. Mile after mile slipped away behind their anxiously hurrying feet, but their pace was slowing. Already the vile diet and the scarcity of the food was being felt. Though the fierce nutritional disturbance was not repeated, it had been replaced by a heavy feeling in the stomachs of the whites, and their heads ached at times with a racking severity. Their whole systems craved warm liquid, one of the greatest mainstays to the

human traveller in frigid zone. Men have done prodigious distances on a ration of hot tea.

The country began to grow rougher as the day advanced, with more rocks of increasing size making their appearance. The shoreline was now marked with "icefoot," permanent ice adhering to the land, probably ages old—a feature which had been absent on the sandy shore of the harbour where first the *Varangian* had lain.

To this icefoot the sea ice was now extending rapidly farther and farther out under the increasing cold. This the party viewed with leaping hopes, for, according to Chikchigalook's calculations, the point of Mackenzie Bay, from where they could strike across on the ice to Herschel Island and save nearly a hundred miles, was now at the most but five more days of marching. With the ice formed, the journey to Herschel became a less terrible thing. Once there, Chikchigalook was upon familiar ground, and could quickly and easily lead them to the police post.

When they made camp that night in the lee of a towering boulder, Kane and Jimmy were of the opinion that they had covered at least one hundred and twenty-five miles. Elfrida thought the figure excessive, and argued, what with the shortness of the days, their slowing speed, the growing roughness of the ground, and the half day lost through sickness of the Esquimaux, that they had

not covered more than a hundred. Seated with their backs to the rock, and perhaps thirty feet from where the Esquimaux had thrown themselves down, the whites were about to start upon the eating of their night ration—which growing hunger and blunting taste now made almost palatable—when Chikchigalook and Polniak rose and, advancing, stopped close in front of them.

Even before the Esquimaux spokesman uttered a word, the whites sensed trouble in their manner. “We want meat,” Chikchigalook remarked shortly, in tone he had never used before.

“But you had yours for to-day,” Elfrida replied, mildly reproving.

For answer the man only repeated, with the sullen insistence of an angry child: “We want meat.”

Once again the girl went over all her arguments regarding the necessity of conserving what remained of the food, chiding him gently for his own and his comrades’ greediness in eating all their day’s rations that morning.

Chikchigalook heard her out in silence, muttered a few words in Esquimaux to Polniak, and, turning away, they once more rejoined their women.

“I’m afraid we’re going to have trouble,” Kane ventured dubiously. “After all it’s only a matter

of the next three meals, so why not give it to them."

But Elfrida vigorously refused the suggestion. "Oh, they're all right. It's only a matter of being firm with them for their own good. They're just like children."

So, seated close together against the wall of the great boulder, shaped like a loaf of bread, Elfrida and Kane fell to discussing the sociological campaign they planned on their return to San Francisco. Jimmy, while the light remained, became busy with his diary. He had a black note book, obtained from Devil Maclean following his recovery. Into this he had pencilled a detailed account of the everyday happenings of his trip, and a description of the country, with added extensive notes about whaling and whaling ships and other miscellaneous material, all of which he intended to draw upon for a series of articles for his paper upon his return, as well as for a novel, the outline of which had begun gradually to shape itself as the voyage had progressed.

Of the four rifles in the party, Elfrida had originally carried one, Jimmy and Kane two more, and Chikchigalook the remaining one. But even the lightest article takes on exceeding weight when packed on all day tramp, particularly so awkwardly shaped thing as a rifle. So in the last few days of the forced march every one of the

party had taken a turn at carrying these. Thus it so came about that when this day's walk ended, Polniak, Chikchigalook, Oanaleena and Jimmy were carrying the rifles. And in this order they had come into the night camp. On their demand for meat being refused, Chikchigalook and Polniak had gone back to the women, and the whole party sat down at one end of the huge boulder shaped like a loaf of bread. Jimmy, Kane and Elfrida were seated at the side, so that neither party had sight of the other, the boulder being some twelve feet high by perhaps twenty-five feet long.

From the absorption of his writing Jimmy suddenly looked up to see, with momentarily unbelieving eyes, Chikchigalook and Polniak step stealthily around the corner of the boulder each with a rifle in his hand. And the reporter realised that Elfrida had been mistaken in making light of the danger of refusing food to these primitive people. Jimmy was several feet nearer to the Esquimaux than his companions. Their backs were toward the approaching men. Jimmy realised too late that he alone of the three now was in possession of a weapon; three feet from his side lay the .30-.30. And this was no time to question intentions, but to act.

With a lightning lunge he threw himself full length forward, grasped and was swinging into

position the .30-.30, but as he brought the muzzle up, his finger on the trigger, Polniak fired.

At a scant fifteen feet, in such a marksman's hand, the result was ghastly gruesome. Half Jimmy's neck, from the left edge of the chin clear to the collar bone, the spreading, "soft-nose" bullet tore away, and Jimmy crumpled up and was dead.

Like wounded things both Kane and Elfrida started at the sound of this unexpected firing. Half encased in their sleeping bags for warmth, their legs encumbered, they faced about, still seated, to stare into the muzzle of guns thrust threateningly a scant three feet from their faces.

At the outset, the Esquimaux' intention had been only to recover their share of the food; for in spite of Elfrida's words and the established friendship begun so many months ago upon the *Varangian*, unreasoning fear and senseless suspicion had suddenly seized them. Now, however, with Jimmy's resistance and death, their own action of killing caused their hearts to harden from very fear.

With angry voice, Chikchigalook bade them stand up with their backs to the rock. While Polniak covered them with his rifle, Chikchigalook recovered all the remaining food. Then picking up the third rifle from where it had dropped from Jimmy's hands, the two Esquimaux

backed away around the corner of the rock and rejoined their women, a little regretful now, wishing no more murder, but more distrustful since they had made enemies of people but a short hour ago their friends.

Voiceless now Kane moved to the side of the still form of his companion. Dropping upon his knees he turned over the stiffening mass of clay that once had been his so dear friend, staring into the contorted face for a moment. Then he covered the face with a much soiled handkerchief. Great sobs welled up and choked him. "Jimmy; Jimmy, pal. Oh, Jimmy, pal!" His stunned brain and bruised heart could find no fresh expression, and he fell into dreary repetition, the disconsolate murmuring of one so utterly stricken that thoughts no longer flowed, and tears, torrential and scalding, poured down his face.

In this minute, here on his knees beside his so bravely fallen friend, Kane's thoughts went drifting back to that night in the Argonaut Club, seemingly now such an eternity ago, and memory came of Jimmy's regretful though acceptant admission: "I was born to casual ways," and his own answer, "Given the situation and the moment you'd put me to shame."

How prophetic his words had been.

After many minutes, Elfrida, standing near,

sympathetic but motionless and silent, with face cold, hard and frozen as the age-old rock beside her, leaned down. When Kane gave no answer to her gentle touch upon his shoulder, she, realising the depth of his agony made him uncomprehending, drew him with strong arms to his feet, and with gentle urging and warning against the cold, persuaded him to crawl into his sleeping bag.

Presently when he was calmer, she, ever the resourceful and undaunted, brought him back to present things with grim question: "Well, what do you think we'd better do?"

But this was most puzzling question. Foodless and weaponless, and with torturing wonder of what would be the next move of the Esquimaux, they were in difficult position.

"We've got to think faster than them," Elfrida said, by way of opening remark.

"I hate to cut and run," Kane remarked, after a minute or two of thinking, "but it looks like the wisest thing to do. And once we get a start in this half dark it'll take some shooting to hit us."

So they decided. Rolling their sleeping bags they shouldered them. Then hugging close the dark boulder they crept on hands and knees around the opposite end. A drifting mass of cloud hid the moon, and covered half the sky to the east and south, making for semi-darkness. Reaching the end of the boulder they went crawl-

ing cautiously on over the ground which stretched unevenly ahead of them, the surface dotted with boulders, offering plentiful cover to shield their escape should the Esquimaux happen to look for them in the next few minutes. So they went from boulder's cover to boulder's cover; slipped on through the frozen, hushing night like fantastic phantoms in an inchoate world, where only rock and snow was visible. With a hundred yards put behind them, they rose to their feet and went on faster.

Elfrida ever since leaving the ship had kept her wrist watch going, and now it proved invaluable in judging their movement.

"We'll walk until twelve; that ought to make us safe," she said.

They had been gone perhaps an hour when the Esquimaux, at last, after much argument, finally decided upon an action contrary to their desire, crept around the rock with rifles ready, determined to put an end to the remaining whites as the best thing for their own future safety; for, if the two were let escape, it was certain that the Mounted Police would eventually be notified, and Chikchigalook had a tremendous fear and respect for the men of this body stationed at Herschel Island, this farthest outpost of the civilised world. But, slow-thinking as they were, the Esquimaux

had not expected such quick action on the part of Kane and Elfrida, foodless, weaponless as they were, and without knowledge of the country. With the whites gone, however, it was impossible to do anything until the light of morning. So, determining to take up the chase with the coming dawn, they lay down.

But when morning came, such is the irony of Nature, Polniak on rising caught sight of a caribou moving in the near distance inland. An hour after the five Esquimaux were feeding on its meat, while plain to their sight farther inland moved fully fifty more. So their fear of the revenge of the whites should they succeed in finding succor was quickly outweighed by the present possibility of plentiful food, and they went on in the wake of the caribou band.

In spite of their late travelling, Elfrida woke with the first streak of dawn. The cold had deepened. A vast weariness lay upon her, and but for the fear of the Esquimaux' pursuit she would have lain close-crawled in her sleeping bag. With an effort she forced herself to rise. The crisping air stung with every indrawn breath. With sharp words she finally roused her weary companion, always a heavy sleeper.

Once again, and more famished than ever, they took the trail. As they moved along, Kane found

himself oddly wondering at the strangeness of things; for the sake of a few bits of wisely withheld dogmeat, Jimmy had lost his life. In trying to help the simple people, they had been misunderstood. It was always the little things, the insignificant trifles that caused life's greatest tragedies.

With the fear of pursuit still upon them, they pressed forward rapidly—too rapidly for their ill-nourished condition, and after the tension of the previous evening, and their greatly shortened rest.

By early afternoon exhaustion had taken such a hold that they were forced to make camp while the sun was still far from setting.

With the dark, the already intense cold increased. In the lee of a rock where the snow had gathered deep they made camp. Lying close together they drew the snow around and over them, making for softness and greater warmth.

Again day's wan dawn crept from out a frost-misted east as though protesting against being ushered into so cold a world. Only after many minutes' striving, a fierce struggle of will over pain-racked matter, did the two gain their feet. It was the bitterest weather they had encountered. Every breath was a stab. The momentary exposure of the tiniest bit of flesh brought the

burning touch of frost. Only mad or desperate people would have moved in such low temperature.

And now with the first hour's walking both were conscious how great was the weariness which beset them. Their whole frames—sinews, bones and muscles in unison—were giving out under the strain of this unremitting endeavour through frozen, fireless land. As the brief day waned toward night their limbs seemed, with every fresh taken step, to be gripped to earth, and were only raised again by supremest effort. Each thigh bone became a thing of pain that drove home cruelly stabbing darts of fire with the rise and fall of their leaden legs. Hunger's gnawing added to the torture. They had been ill-nourished for so long that now the withdrawal of even the small ration was a telling blow.

They camped with the setting sun. By morning desire for food was less acute; their heads ached; there was a furious throbbing in every fibre. By night the hunger pangs had dulled; at daybreak they were gone; instead came apathy, a vast and almost overpowering inertia. Yet still they conquered it, and bore on.

The weather, as nearly always at times of extremely low temperature, had been bright and clear, the sun's rays turning the snow to a dazzling, blinding expanse, a sheen that set the eyes

of the plodding marchers to throbbing, quickly followed by excruciating pain.

Still they plunged forward, half-starved, nearly snow-blind creatures in a ghastly world, with only hope to go on.

They wanted life—life; Life; LIFE. Life and the desire for it still throbbed strong in their battered human frames despite all the agony and the wasting of these past terrible days. Within them cried and fought and lingered strong the Yea-to-be, the tenacious mystery of all the ages. Life, life, life—hopefully, desperately, madly they clung to it, plodding unwaveringly onward, grim, dogged, despairing, but undaunted; and all this ghastly ordeal, this nightmare of movement through phantasmagoric fields of frost but served to lash them forward, spurring their fading strength and guiding consciousness to more gigantic undertakings.

Once again they slept, again to press forward. They lost track of time; went on through seeming phantom-fested world; slept when it was dark; moved ahead with returning day, two blurs, two blots, two specks of fevered ferment, alone in a stark world; with feelings slowly deadening, coherent thought fast ebbing away, still drilled on, most ghastly automatons. Again and again the flesh of them cried out to rest, to lie down, to die. But deep within the unknowable, unplumbed

crypts of both numbing brains there still flared strong the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon, the indomitable fire that had made their race conquerors of many lands, lords and looters of high seas, masters and drivers of men. So they moved on, the hard-dying spark upholding their titubating shells, driving ever forward the weary, stumbling feet across a waste which now their eyes could scarce discern.

Thus triumphing over pain, fighting weakness, scorning Fate's frost-mailed fist, defying death itself, laughing in the face of eternity, they struggled ahead. Mile by mile, with limbs racked and weary, slow-footed the unknown leagues away. Out of the steely sky by night the hungry stars mocked them lying lonely in their fireless camps, and the sun-dogs leered from the far horizon as they moved in the light of day. At times as Kane walked it seemed to him dimly that he had always been a part of this frost and snow. Then memory came of other things: that out there to the south and eastward, beyond the frozen skyline, men moved, great cities throbbed with life—with life, good, great life, strong-palpitating, warm. It was this—this life that now concerned him; and with the thought of existence out there in that golden land outside, his wavering legs would spasmodically strengthen, swing into faster stride. Often he shook his fist at the

vague, grim stars, hating the cold glint of these arcs of hyperborean night; and he laughed, and in his half-crazed way flung foolish taunts to the round-eyed sundogs as they flashed along the sky rim their warmthless beams, or, sinking, winked their bleary solitary eyes, like scornful Satyrs, as if in vastly droll humour at the insignificance of the little tryings and plans of men. Sometimes he took the lead, and sometimes walked behind Elfrida, but always were they close. And often as he walked beside her he caught her mutteringly droningly: "Everything ends . . . everything ends. . . ." Over and over again for long intervals she repeated these words; then all of a sudden would alternate to: "I'll get there . . . I'll get there . . . I'll get there," a countless times repeating, as if the very repetition was an assurance of success.

Late on the sixth afternoon after leaving the Esquimaux Elfrida fell, lay huddled and still, too weak, too weary even to voice a cry. With his eyes near to utter blindness and hurting with an agony unnameable, Kane did not see her though he was but half-a-dozen steps behind. But coming on with drunken roll, his feet encountered her, and so unsteady was his gait that he came hurtling down. His mechanically outspread hands broke his fall, but for several moments he lay as he had fallen, legs across Elfrida's waist.

Presently he dragged himself clear, but did not rise. Weakly he crawled close to her, throwing one arm over her. With hand that worked from no conscious brain direction, but only an action instinctive, he drew her close. And thus close-crawled together, Kane and Elfrida, silent now and still as babes asleep, and sinking into deeper lasting slumber, were found by Drs. Anderson and Bjorson, of the Canadian Arctic Exploration Expedition not twenty minutes after they fell.

A chance twist of Bjorson's field glasses while on his work of coastal survey had brought Kane's moving figure to his notice when a good half mile away. In such lone land the sight of any man is a great event, and Bjorson with eyes glued to the glass had followed the last stumbling steps of the two, and seen them fall.

With deft hands they laid the two quiet forms upon the sleigh and started back to camp; and such was the sleeper's exhaustion that neither moved nor knew that that existence so hardly clung to, so sternly battled for, was once more firmly in their grasp.

CHAPTER TEN

The Law of Propinquity

THE Canadian Arctic Exploration Expedition had made its headquarters that winter at Herschel Island. Using this as a base, eight parties of scientists from two to three to a party worked in various directions along the mainland, returning occasionally to the Island for provisions.

To the straggling little line of rough shack-type buildings which make the settlement of Herschel Island, Kane and Elfrida came after a preliminary rest with Bjorson and Anderson, and were welcomed with the warmth, the unstinted and sincere cordiality that only the northland knows. The auxiliary schooner the *Rosie B.*, out of San Francisco, Captain Lane commanding, was wintering at Herschel, and, there being no adequate accommodation in any of the houses on shore, Kane and Elfrida were taken aboard by Inspector La Nauze, the big-hearted commander of the Mounted Police, always a kindly guardian and assistant to wandering pilgrims of the frozen places.

And then Kane, not a little to his pride and gratification, was astonished by the effect on Captain Lane when he revealed his identity, in reply to the captain's interested questioning.

"Yes, my name is Kane. Commonly known as 'Wild' Bill in San Francisco, but I certainly wasn't expecting my fame had spread this far."

"What!" the skipper cried astonished. "Why, don't you know you're a world sensation, or were when I left. Why, man, the police forces of five continents and thousands of private detectives have scoured the world over for news or trace of you. There is a twenty thousand dollar reward posted by your company for word of you."

Captain Lane led the way to his cabin where was a file of months old newspapers. He had left San Francisco some six weeks after the departure of the *Ena*, and, like all thoughtful men coming North, had brought a tremendous supply of current reading matter for the perusal of the police and any chance come quest, not at all uncommon arrivals to ships sailing in the arctic, where accidents are many and the law of helpfulness is strongest.

Seated in comfort, Kane read once more of the doings in a world closed this many months to him. It was all very strange this sitting here and reading of one's self in heading spread across seven columns of a newspaper. He read every story to

the last line, amused; but it was with no deeper feeling. His parents both dead many years, and he an only child, there was really no one to whom his disappearance had caused the least pain. It was, however, with genuine feeling that he read the less prominent mention of Jimmy, for Kane knew the reporter's mother had been much to her son.

"Must look after her," he said to himself, and his mind went flitting back to that unlooked-for moment of the Esquimaux attack, and Jimmy, brave defender, dropping lifeless by the rock.

"Poor old Jimmy, hero that he was, though he had said himself, 'I was born to casual ways,' " Kane thought, musing sadly.

Frozen in inside the long sandspit which formed a possible harbour alongside Herschel Island, the *Rosie B.* had still many months of waiting before putting back to San Francisco.

By way of distraction Kane went hunting often with Captain Lane, bringing in on several occasions splendid specimens of polar bear. Once or twice Elfrida accompanied them, but for the most part remained aboard. Here, comfortably housed, private, secure, and with a wealth of writing paper at her disposal she took up again the task of writing her book, the recreating from the cold embers of her being a work once produced and finished—began that most depressing task, which

few of those who write are brave enough to attack, recoiling in horror from even the contemplation of rebuilding word framework once constructed. At first Elfrida progressed slowly, torn and miserable, nerve-lashed and irritable; but, grimly determined, went on and slowly warmed to her work, and thoughts flowed freely and in volume.

Summer came early that year to the northland. On the fifteenth day of June the *Rosie B.* nosed her way through a sea still lightly cluttered with rafts of ice, and Herschel Island dropped from sight.

When men move for long in wild, wind-swept, solitary wastes, they intensify themselves. Days and weeks and months of such living foster thoughts which bring what is within their minds to fruition. And Kane, naturally big-souled, sympathetic, had in the past months of ardent living turned his thoughts not only outward upon endless hitherto foreign subjects, but inward also, and probed and puzzled, finding how empty all these years had been his soul.

"A thorough understanding of life and how it affected his relations with the rest of the world." Elfrida's words, spoken on the *Varangian* had remained with him. And, too, her succinct say-

ing: "There are some men that just can't take care of themselves."

On this last remark Kane had finally based his plans of future action: he would, with Elfrida's aid, find such people, the countless thousands that needed leadership, and bring them to better things.

So as the *Rosie B.* moved on toward San Francisco the two, seated in the cosy big cabin, turned over to Elfrida by Captain Lane for a work room, spent long hours in planning and consultation.

And without their fully realising it, that spark, created by propinquity, grew stronger, turned to ember, and lay smouldering, smouldering, requiring but the first faint breeze to fan it into fiercest flame.

Two nights out from San Francisco they sat late, talking in the cabin, perfecting plans for the early part of their campaign. As they rose and moved toward the door to seek their sleeping quarters, Kane caught both of her hands in his with boyish enthusiasm. "How wonderful it all has been. . . ." He had begun joyously, his manner that of camaraderie, the man-footing upon which they had always met. But the following intended words died in his throat.

At the touch of her hand a queer thrill had run through all his body. Now, involuntarily, his grasp tightened. He looked upon her face, all

his senses reeling, and the love-light of a strong man's desire, a little primitive, but clean and fine and true, was in his eyes. Then, in the succeeding moment, as two high power carbons brought together will spark and flame, a kindred gleam showed in her eyes. For one star-falling flash of time she strove to be her old self, to retain her man-poise, her man-thinking, her manly way and independence which scorned the feminine things of life. But love had come to rob her of that long maintained but pseudo guise of masculinity. In her form swaying so faintly toward him, Kane read his answer—caught her to him and held her very close, while his lips hungry and afire sought satiety in her now answering ones.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

The Great Foundation

HOW far, how infinitely far, man had come —and yet what a *little way!*

Often in the weeks and months following his return to San Francisco, Kane was filled with this thought as he encountered difficulty after difficulty, disappointment on disappointment in the results of the work he and Elfrida had set themselves to do. Human greed and selfishness met him at every turning. Class hate, suspicion and trickery camped in wait for him, till, at times, looking out of the high window of his office in the Kane Building towering over noisy Market Street, he fastened his eyes on Mount Tamalpais, and decision came to be as this mountain—calm, aloof, acceptant of life, watching the world about him as a vast pageant of pleasure and pain, but playing no active part, merely going on as he had in days before the arctic wastes had claimed him and made him think. He thought of Jimmy's philosophy of acceptance, the reporter's certainty that all men moved helpless in the hand of an unchangeable Fate; and thinking this, Kane decided

to give up his task of regenerating and making happy at least a small portion of humanity. But always he put the thought away. Then, thinking farther, he saw that, if Jimmy's conception that each man's path was a destined way was right, then no man could take credit for his actions, good or bad; that what each man did was not of his own volition; and that his continuing in this course which he had been turned to by his own experience on the *Ena* and through meeting Elfrida, was something over which he had no control.

But Kane could not accept this belief. With passionate human fervour he retained his certainty in the existence of free will. This new work—despite the many disappointments attending it, the painfully enlightening views he received almost daily of the sad sordidness of many human beings around him—gave him pleasure, gratifying titillations, a feeling of infinite well-being and comfort he had never known before. He *felt* he was doing good, and joy was his reward. So he put Jimmy's theory away, for to accept it would have robbed his every worth while act of all its fineness.

His return, and marriage to Elfrida caused more excitement and publicity than perhaps any event since the earthquake four years previously.

All the people that had made up his world of

the past flocked around him, curious to see this strange and stately woman. But Elfrida's heart was filled with other aims and ambitions; and quickly Kane's old friends dropped away. About the two soon gathered a little army of volunteer helpers from various walks of life, radicals anti-clericals and radicals religious, a strange motley, widely differing on many points, very few of the same opinion, but all filled with a great fire, an eager longing for human betterment, and all willing to sacrifice, though in varying degree, for a worthy cause. Marxians and followers of Fourier, Fabians and Christian Socialists, men and women practical and others wildly dreaming, utter children in their blind faith in human nature—all flocked about Elfrida, drawn by the power of her magnetism, her assurance of leadership, her magnificent calm, the poise of a born commander. And such is the gift of some of this world's children, quickly Elfrida utilised the labours of all this varied motley, finding each one useful, a help and a good apostle in a work so infinitely ramifying in its scope.

Early on an October afternoon, some six months after his return, Kane, seated in the den of his home at Menlo Park, started slightly with pleasure as an item on the marine page caught his eye. He had been looking for this for some

days. Five minutes later he was in telephonic communication with his port captain, and in five minutes more was in his motor speeding cityward.

Seated at his desk in the Kane Building two hours later Kane felt a slight tingling of his nerves as the door opened and in the wake of his port captain there walked in Devil Maclean.

Grim old seabird of lonely arctic wastes, his figure commanding for all the slight stoop of his shoulders, Maclean came to a stop before Kane's desk. A moment he stared, puzzled by the familiarity of the face before him; but his mind was not equal to such wild association of ideas as would have been necessary to make recognition possible. Besides, clothes and barbers make great changes in a man.

Maclean had returned for a renewal of the *Ena's* charter, and was not a little surprised when the port captain, in keeping with a prearranged plan with Kane, made several weeks before when the time for Maclean's return drew near, had informed him that Kane, long but a figurehead, had taken full charge of the shipping end of the business, and that all matters were now dealt with by him personally.

From his port captain, Kane had learned that Maclean had sailed into port with two vessels, the second bearing the prosaic name of "*Whaler*." But a hurried trip on Kane's part to where the

Ena and her consort lay, had at once acquainted Kane that the "*Whaler*" was the *Varangian* thinly disguised. Following which discovery he had arranged the meeting.

"I guess you can't place me, captain," Kane said, rising slowly.

Macleane eyed him thoughtfully, his eye friendly to this young man before him who was so powerful in the financial world.

"Your face is famileer, but blest if I can get the connexion."

Kane smiled, a grim smile, but one without hatred. Devil Maclean played the game of life by his own hard lights, and recent months had made Kane tolerant. Until this moment, though he had decided on this meeting many weeks before, no thought of any definite action had been his. Now, all uncalled a whimsical suggestion came, and in the following second decision to act upon it. He said, speaking slowly, his voice almost good humoured, the modulation and expression as of a man relating a story: "One grey May morning Skipper Maclean stood at the wheel conning his vessel out to sea from the harbour of San Francisco, when before his eyes a ragged giant loomed and forced upon him battle. I'm the giant, captain, and you licked me, and now I demand a chance for revenge."

Grey of face stared Devil Maclean, a little of

the tiger litness and assurance of the deep sea driver of men dropped from his person. It was too monstrous, too unbelievable, this statement that he heard. But Maclean was Scotch, and of the sea, and fifty battering years of surprising life lay behind him, so that his recovery was rapid. A gleam actually came to his eye, born of the suspicion of what the other man was now about to say. He said: "I've had many funny things happen to me, but this takes away the masts; now name your proposition."

"My car is outside, and it's only a minute's run to a sporting club on Kearney Street. I'm going to fight you there, Maclean; and I'm going to be top dog this time."

Maclean nodded his grizzled head. "Nothing could be fairer," he admitted; and in the hard heart of this tough old man of the sea the first fear of prison, which had come with realisation who this man before him was, departed. Maclean knew men; and now knew that Kane's retaliation would go no farther than this action of fair combat which he now demanded.

The auditorium of the Fairmont Sporting Club was a commodious though not large room, a place exclusive where a thousand odd of San Francisco's moneyed class occasionally came to witness a fistic combat between one of their own

members and some professional fighter, or again two of their own circle.

To this Kane and the captain came, accompanied only by the port captain. A regulation prize ring occupied the centre of the room, the tier on tier of ringed seats reaching from its raised floor to a height of perhaps ten feet above it.

Stripped to his undershirt, his belt drawn a little tighter, Kane faced his ancient adversary, also denuded of hampering clothing.

Cool, alert, wary the men stood close together, a moment pausing, measuring, studying. Then Kane's eager fist, no longer brooking delay, lashed out. The fight was on. Maclean countered; and in the succeeding minute a dozen blows were dealt, some countered, some finding, aimed for mark on shoulder, chest and chin. Blow on blow and back away, and stealthy circling, then furious comings together, a rain of blows, tremendous sluggings of men each eager to lay insensible at his feet the other. A minute passed; from Kane's cheek blood flowed. He, in turn, had twice landed heavily on the captain's chest close over the heart, and once, less heavily, to the jaw. But they were stout men, and tough from months of hardy living, great to withstand much punishment.

So they fought on there, grimly silent—Mac-

lean with carefulness, and saving strength, conscious as he was how tremendous is the handicap of age when it has youth for adversary; while Kane, eager, fresh, and burning with the memory of those past beatings, and savage with desire to avenge his own wrongs and those done to Elfrida, attacked with a fury that kept Maclean almost continually on the defensive.

Minute followed minute. Now their breathing was a little laboured. On Maclean's brow the sweat stood, glistening drops that one by one trickled slowly down his face.

On board his ship, his had been the advantage in previous fights with this man now before him. Now, Kane, leather-shod of foot, and coming fresh to the fight, was an adversary different from and much superior to the Kane of that May day when barefooted and in overalls he had striven to win to liberty from the *Ena*.

Five minutes' fighting with no interval of respite brought to Maclean such a weariness that fear came that Kane had prophesied truly a little while before when he had announced his own victory. Then into the old seaman's brain recollection returned of his famous fighting trick. By this, and this alone, might he still win victory. Countering skilfully a perfect volley of blows, an attack most vicious of the whole encounter, he stepped clear of his adversary and took five quick,

backward steps till he was against the ropes, and half the width of the ring lay between them. Surprised, believing for a second Maclean was running away, was about to leap through the ropes and make for safety in the street beyond, Kane paused a second, then was about to follow when Maclean came toward him again, now with two queer strides, the motion rapid and peculiar, one leg lagging at the second.

The distance between them was a scant four feet when Maclean launched himself into the air, his right leg lashing out—the famous hitch-and-kick of the Canadian backwoods fighter—Maclean's last stratagem, his trick most terrible, upon which now all depended.

But even as he moved in that last taken preparatory step, Kane remembered. As the captain launched himself in the air and his right foot struck out, Kane sprang back, as he did so sending his right hand out in an open-handed blow to strike sideways and downwards the other's heavy-booted foot. Maclean—calculated landing and careful balance upset by this—wavered teetering, his body thrown forward toward his adversary; and in that star-falling flash of time as he titubated thus uncertainly, his guard down, his jaw was outthrust as though posed to receive a blow. Kane struck, and in the striking put all

the power of two hundred pounds made doubly deadly by the revengeful lust that filled him.

Bone against bone, his fist made a queer sounding as it met that jaw so perfectly poised to receive it; and like an ox when strikes the butcher's axe, Maclean went down to lie full length and very still.

"Yes; it was a whole five minutes before he came to," Kane said some hours afterwards as he related to Elfrida the story of the fight.

Though she had known that Maclean was expected shortly to return and that Kane had planned a meeting, Kane had kept from her the arrival, and now when the story was told, she upbraided him, repeating regretfully over and over again: "Oh, if I only could have seen you do it," and in her voice was the pride of the caveman's woman exulting over the prowess of her mate.

"Never mind," he said, "I've found out something and done something that will make up for it to you. You see, I had an idea Maclean wasn't so cold blooded as to do away with your Norwegian crew, so when he came around, I had a heart to heart talk with him." Kane went on to tell of Maclean's recital of the fight he had had with the boats and the death of Haugen and Jennson. "Well, Maclean was in just the fix I

thought he would be when he sailed into San Francisco. He had your crew still aboard. Out in the open sea, backed by his mates and his own crew, he had sufficient force to control them. But in port here, he could only control them by putting them in irons, for all his own crew were restive and clamouring to get ashore. But he daren't let the men from the *Varangian* go, fearing they would take their story to the police. So just before the *Ena* came to port, aided by his crew he put the whole seven of your men in irons, and was going to keep them there till he went to sea. It was the only safe thing he could do. Well, I've fixed all that. I've agreed, on your behalf, that you'll keep your men quiet if he releases them."

"It comes kind of hard to forgive Maclean," Elfrida said reluctantly, "but if you can do it, I can."

Kane nodded. "I think I've found some good material in Devil Maclean. I've had a pretty thorough talk with him and he's agreed to take out the *Ena* again, and the *Varangian* is to go along manned by your Norwegian crew, with Sandy Maclean as skipper, if your men will agree. I've stipulated that he is to try a new way of handling men; that he is to put into effect your suggested rule of curbing kindness, directing firmly but fairly, with always a remembrance and

a toleration for the limitations and handicaps that is the lot of so many men; and that as long as he is aboard the *Ena* his dealings will be fair to all. He has agreed, and for all his notorious character, I believe his word is sacred. At any rate it's only one more phase in our lifework—worth trying, even though it fail. Of course, I'll send at least one man aboard when the *Ena* again sails north who will keep tab on the voyage. You know, it's a case of trust every man, but don't ever fail to cut the cards."

In the months and years that followed, as Kane went on with his study of mankind and his labours to help some of those around him, he saw how gigantic was the task and how little he personally was accomplishing. With eyes made wise by experience he realised that the many writers who claimed: "That right in the end always prevails," were wrong—saw that instead the world was a stage of a vast amphitheatre whereon was enacted an eternal struggle between the forces of right and wrong—with the forces of right forever in the minority; while around in countless seats in the amphitheatre were on-lookers careless, unheeding, ignoring and uncaring about the fight upon the stage. And Kane was made sad by most poignant reflection on the strangeness of the race of man—this race that

for countless centuries had builded such beautiful dreams in sculptured stone, on painted canvas, and in storied word, yet all these centuries had meted out such barbarous treatment to the weak ones of their kind.

And yet there still lurked a hope deep in his soul that some day a world state would be created in which the rule of brotherhood might prevail, a state at least in which the law of the greatest good to the greatest number would make possible the eradicating countless ills which he saw beset humanity. But, with clear, sane vision, the vista-viewing of the practical, he saw this magnificent estate could only be attained to by long years and the great and concentrated striving of many men—that his years would not be many enough for his eyes to see the perfection of the dream.

But, with the realisation of the necessity of a great foundation for any structure that is to last, he went on working, working, with Elfrida at his side; and in the working found life worth while.

THE END

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